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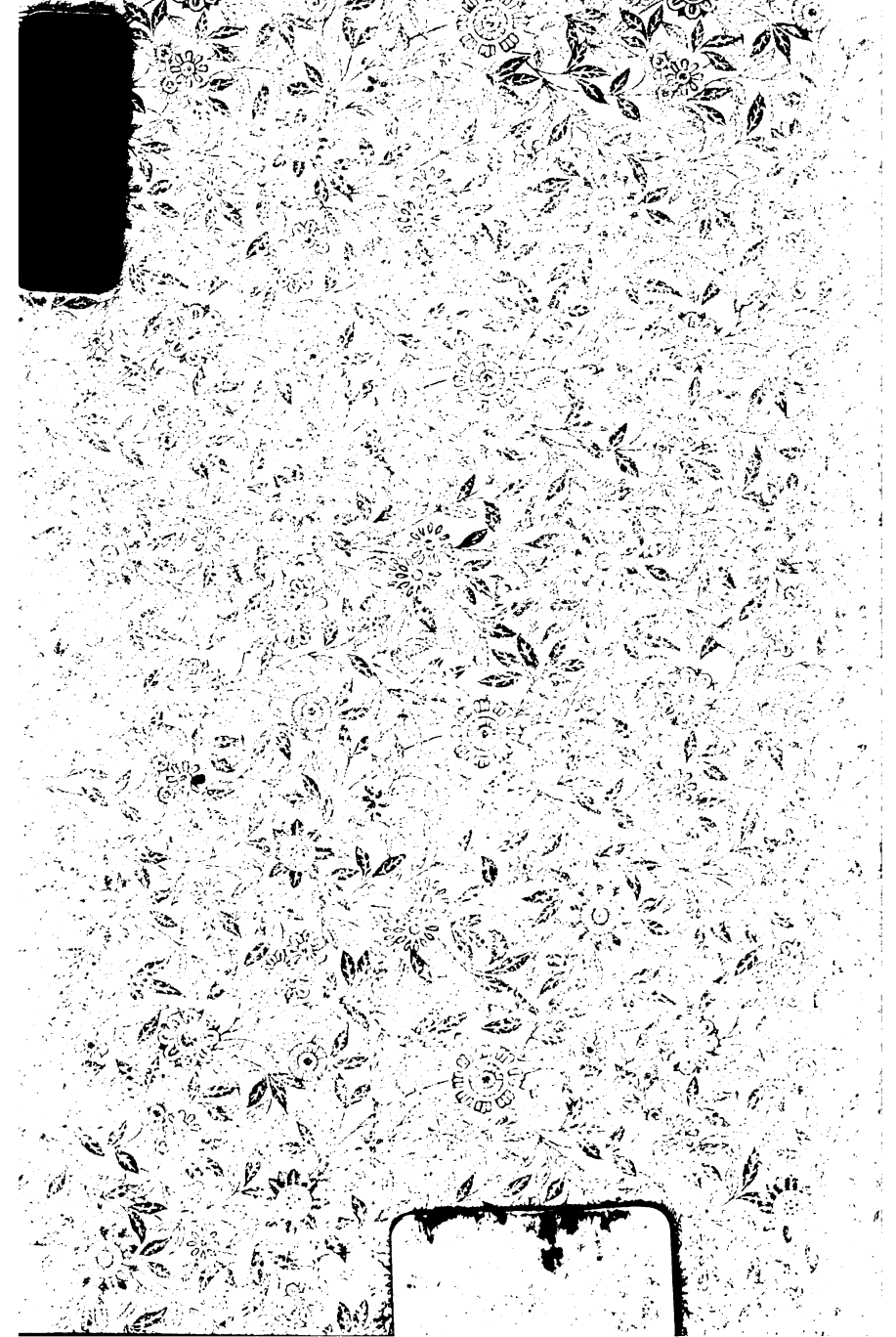
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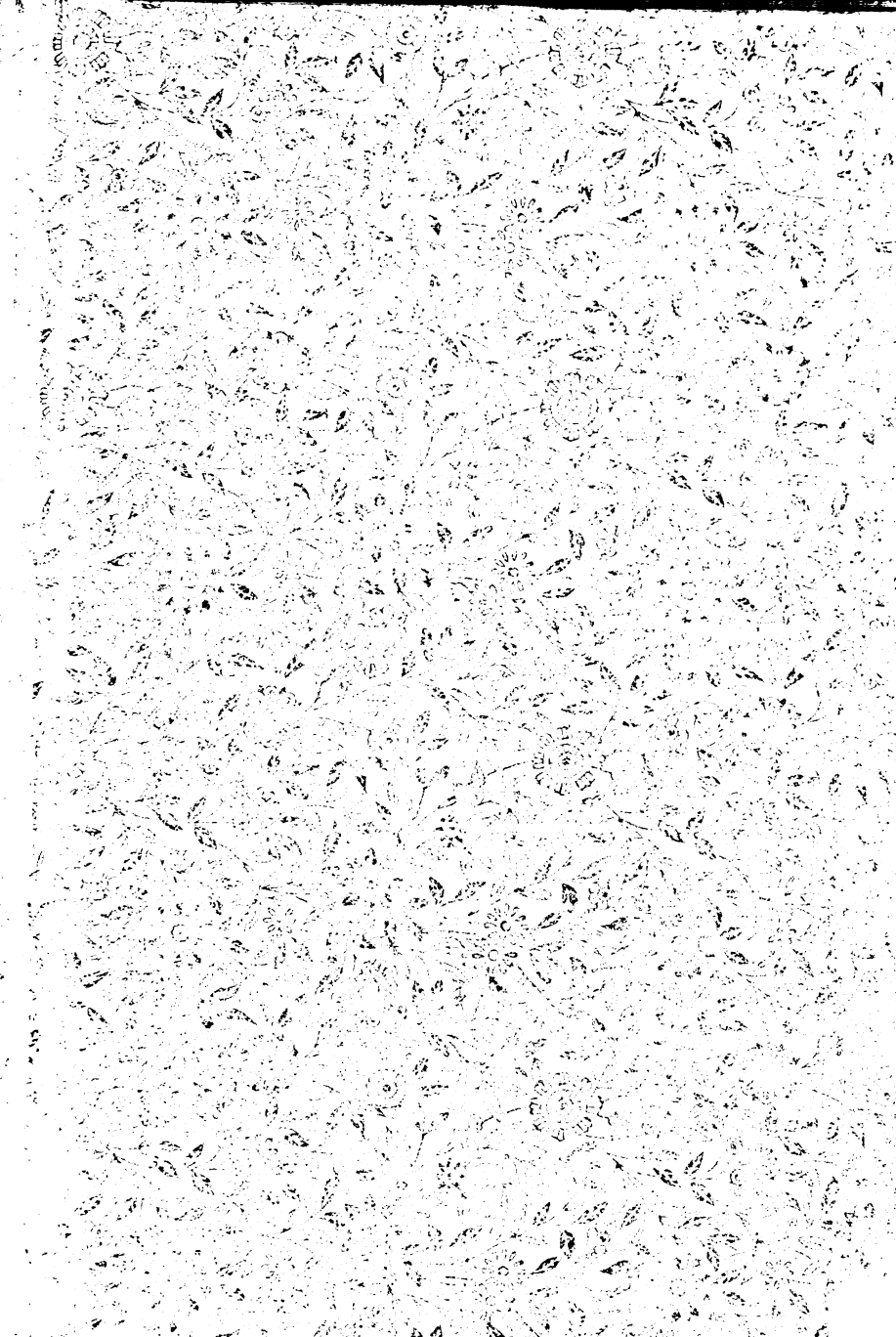
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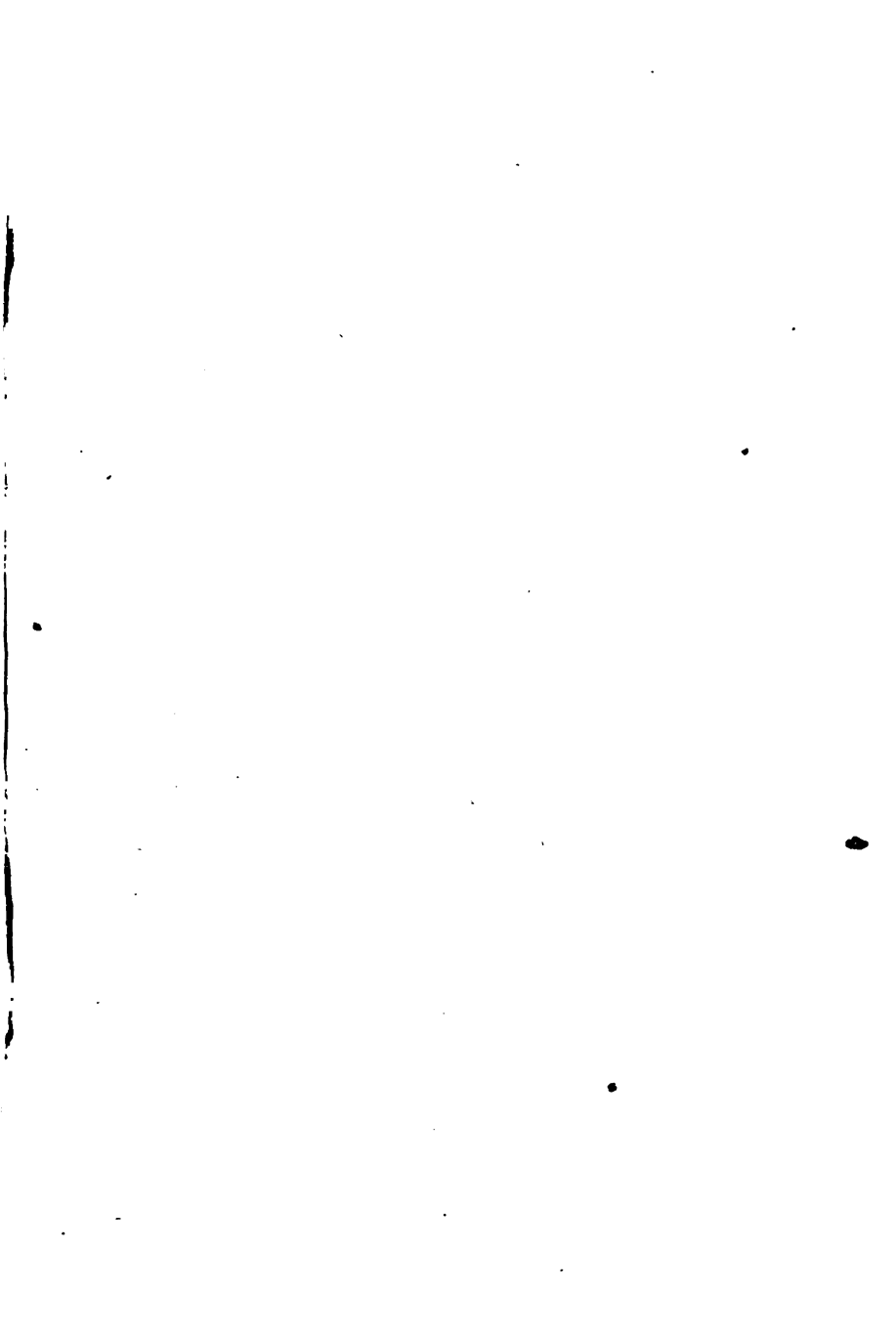
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C O N S P I R A C Y

A CUBAN ROMANCE

BY

ADAM BADEAU

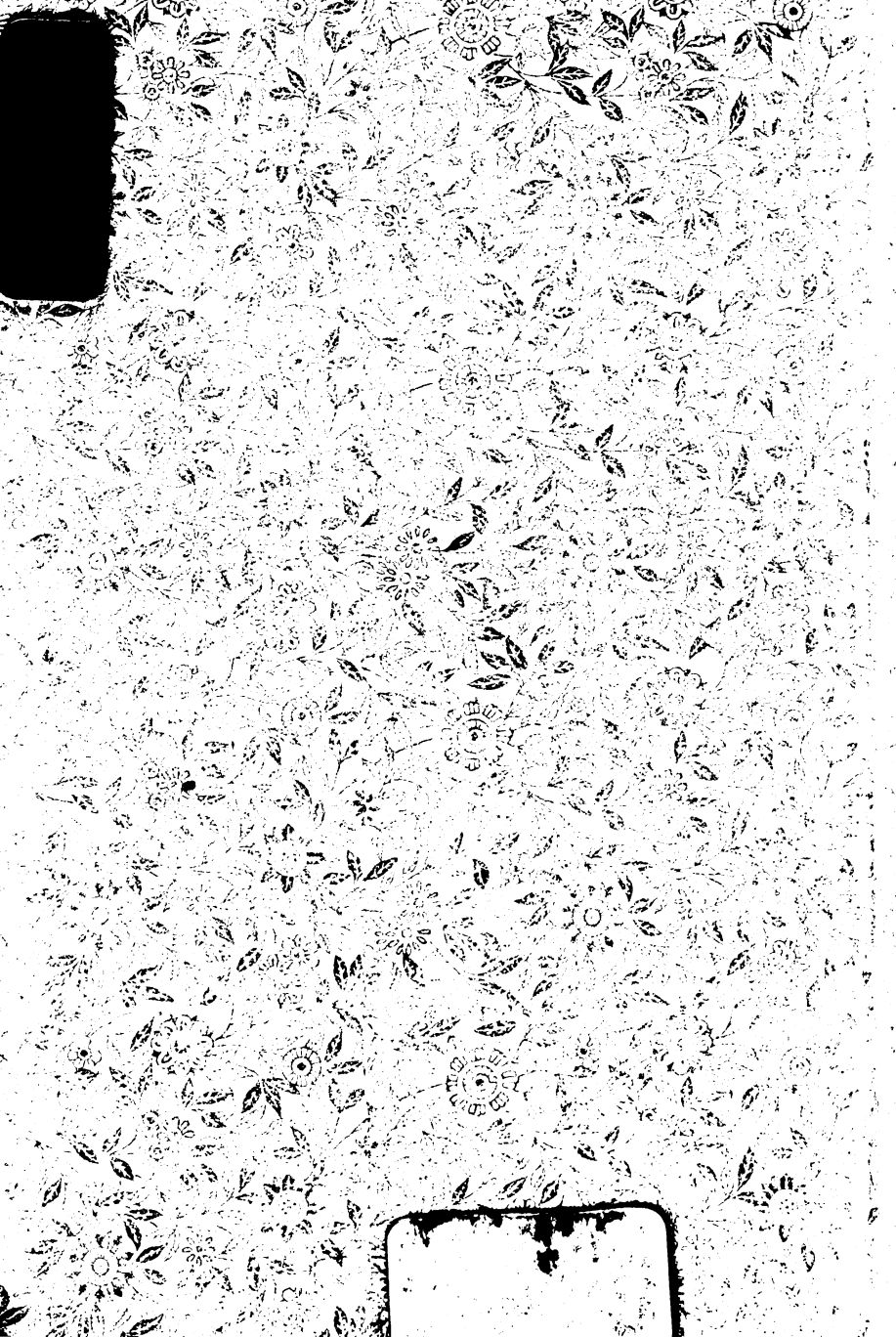
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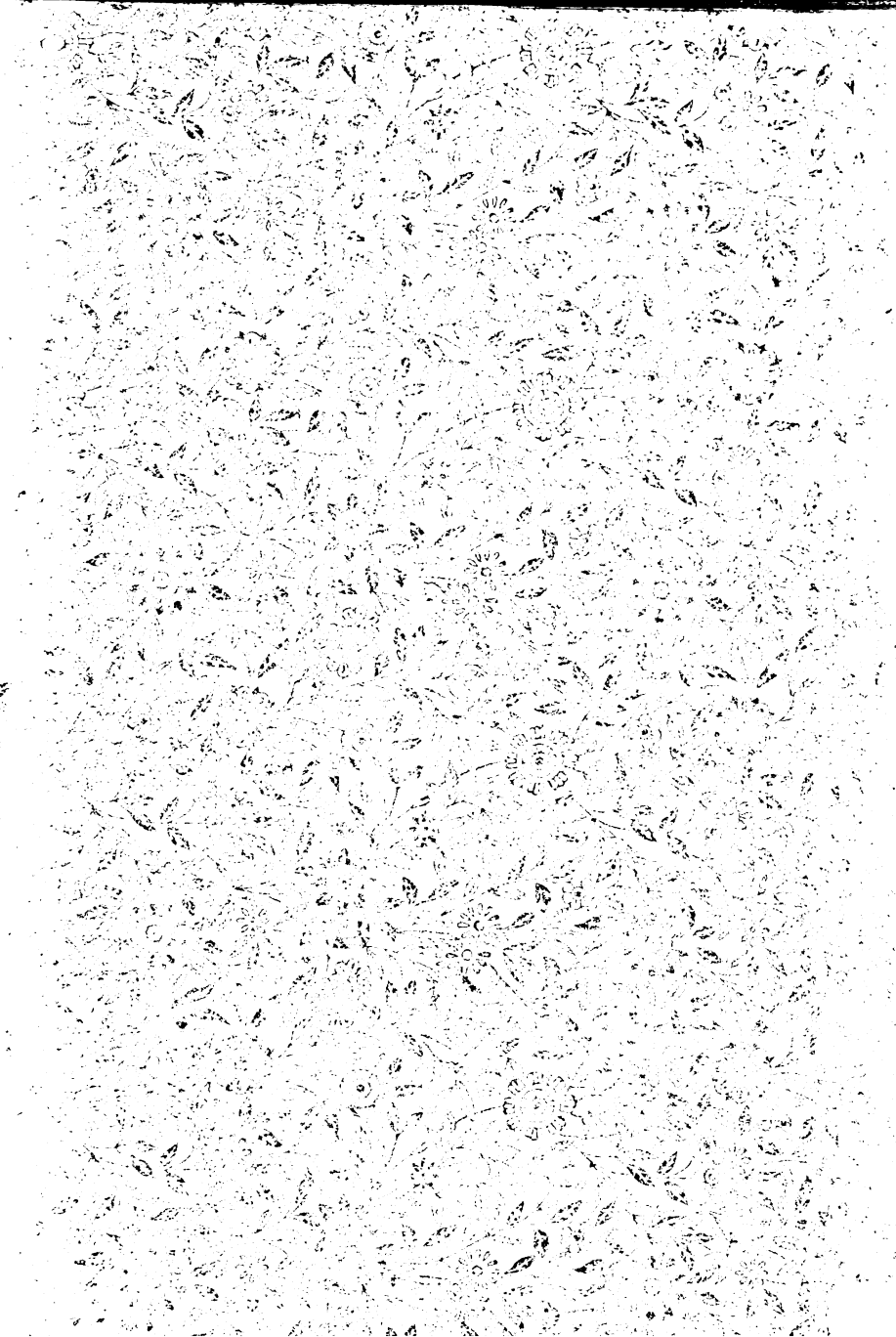
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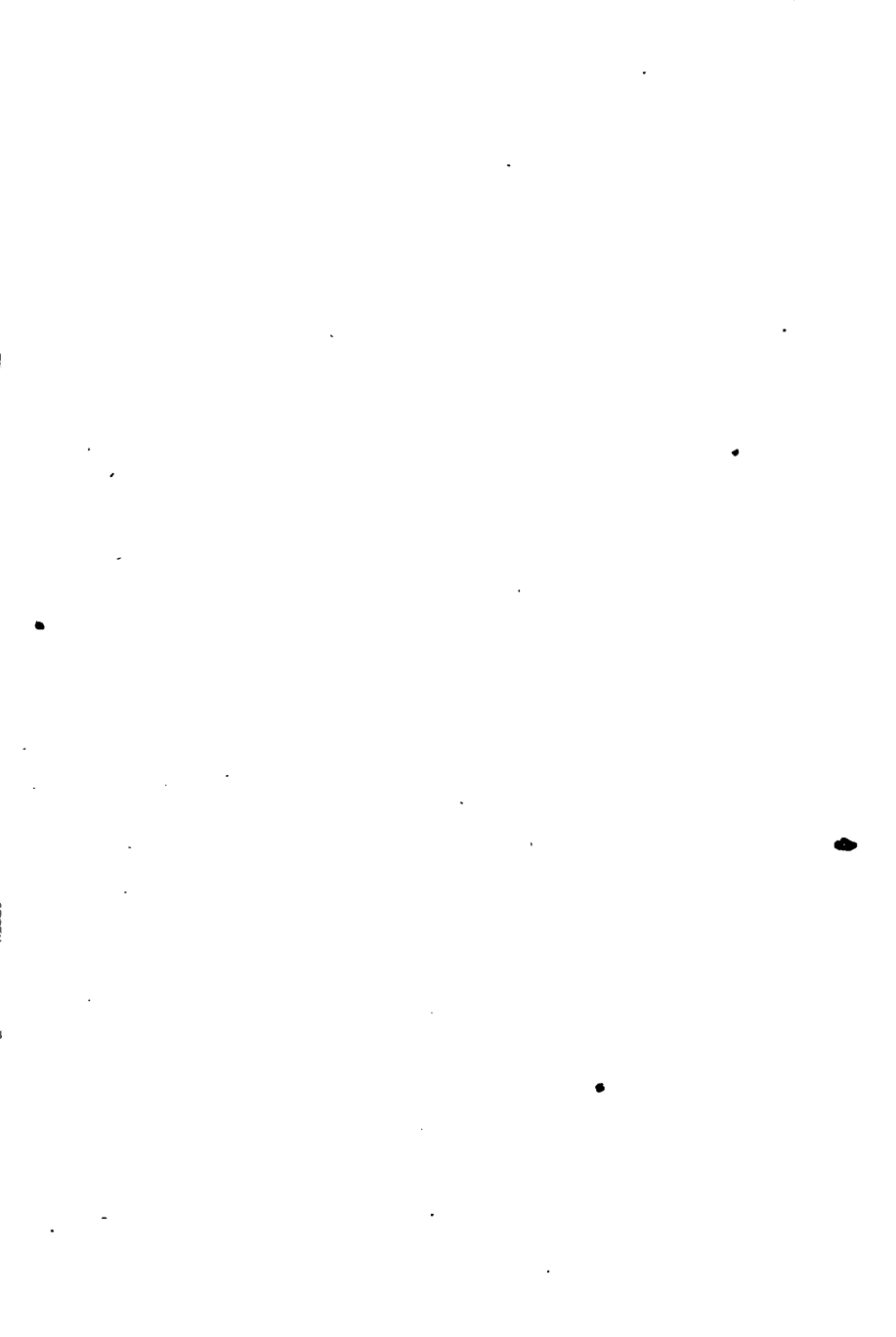
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the insurgents, and these lads of the university were doubtless rebels at heart against Spain.

After a while a few of the younger boys found a cart and mounted it, in front of the cemetery; one child of sixteen years plucked a flower from a garden plot within the walls.

The ecclesiastical person in charge came up at this and rebuked the lads, and they at once perceived the impropriety of their behavior. Those who were on the cart stepped down, the boy who had pulled the flower dropped it penitently, and, obediently and in order, they all quitted the cemetery.

On Thursday and Friday the students were at the university, and the entire incident of Wednesday had passed out of their minds. But on Saturday, the 25th of November, when they were again at their class, the Political Governor of Havana, Don Dionisio Lopez Roberts, entered with two other officers and a party of police, while a company of Volunteers was stationed at the door.

The occurrence at the cemetery had been reported, first to the police and then to higher authority. The Governor himself had visited the spot, and examined the custodian, and discovered certain scratches on the glass before the niche where Castañon was laid. These marks, however, were covered with the results of dampness, indicating that they had not been recently made.

Lopez Roberts at once took the chair of the professor, and announced that he had come to discover the authors of the outrage. The boys were amazed, and at first could not imagine his meaning. But he went on to declare that between two and three o'clock on the afternoon of the 22d they had desecrated the tomb of

Castañon. "You all know what occurred," he said, "which of you is the criminal?"

Several of the lads replied, denying the charge, but Lopez Roberts roughly insisted that the culprit was among them, and demanded his name. The youths repeated that they could not give it, for none of them had done the deed. One called to the Governor himself to name the offender, since he was so confident. But Lopez Roberts declared: "Unless you confess his name, every one of you shall go to the gaol." After some further harangue he began a formal interrogatory. The statement of the curator was taken, and the declarations of the youths, but no evidence could be obtained of any misdeed other than the boyish frolic already described, or of any desecration beyond the scratches on the glass before the tomb. One lad was too energetic in his replies, and the Governor sent him off at once to prison.

The hour was now getting late, and the whole party was ordered to the gaol, where the Inspector of Police was to continue the examination. All who were at the class on the 25th were made responsible for the offence, whether they had been present on the 22d or no. The lads were formed in two files, and marched like common criminals to the civil prison at the foot of the street called the Prado, about a mile from the university. As they left the room one of the associates of Lopez Roberts, Triay by name, called to the youngest of them, him who had plucked the flower: "Neither the money of your father nor the influence of your family will save you from the punishment you deserve."

It was eight in the evening when the forty-five lads entered the gaol. Their names were inscribed on the

prison register, and the examination went on, but not in the general hall. Every now and then one of the party was summoned to another chamber. One, a stripling of seventeen, who confessed that he had played with the cart, did not return. He was sent for his outrageous crime to the convict cell. So also Alonzo Alvarez de la Campa, the child who had plucked the flower. Those who came back from the investigation passed the night in the *jaula*—the “cage,” as it is called—without bed or blanket or food. Their parents were forbidden to supply them, and in the Havana gaol only those already condemned are furnished with rations or beds by the authorities. But the alcalde of the prison was pitiful, and allowed them a few loaves of bread and some boxes of sardines, for which they were grateful. They remained in the *jaula* all day of the 26th, without a chair or seat of any kind among them. The floor was their only resting-place, and no more food was brought.

Meanwhile the profanation of the tomb was noised abroad. Castañon had been shot in a duel at Key West, but the Spaniards chose to consider him a martyr, and had brought his remains to Havana with great pomp. An insult offered to his ashes was more than an ordinary sacrilege. The story grew, of course, with repetition. Not only had the glass been broken and the garlands of everlasting destroyed, but the stone that sealed the tomb had been removed, and the bones taken from the coffin. Yet whoever looked could see the unbroken glass at the opening, and the two scratches over the name. Many now remembered observing these marks three weeks before, on the day of All Saints, when the tombs of the dead are deco-

rated. Nevertheless, the news of the desecration spread throughout the city, and especially among the Volunteers.

The Volunteers were the young Spaniards in Cuba who sided with the government. The authorities themselves were weak, the regular military force was entirely unable to suppress the insurrection, and the civilians of Spanish birth had come to the rescue. They were the tradesmen, the servants, the mechanics of Cuba, officered by men of higher position, whom, however, they completely controlled.

For these Volunteers knew that Cuba was lost to Spain unless they preserved it. They knew, too, the Cuban hate for themselves, and were incensed beyond measure when the creoles announced their intention to expel every Spaniard from the island. Brutal, bloody, unforgiving, they were legitimate descendants of the soldiers of Alva and Philip II., in all their coarser traits, and a sinister element to introduce into a country at the moment of civil war.

Being, however, the most potent ally of the government, they were petted and cajoled, or rather dreaded and obeyed. They had absolutely dismissed one captain-general, and sent him home to Spain. Collecting in front of the official palace, they demanded that the representative of royalty should resign, because he treated the rebels too leniently to suit the tradesmen of Havana; and his Excellency had resigned, and returned to the Peninsula the next day, and the Madrid authorities had pretended not to notice the circumstance. The Volunteers, however, did not ignore it, and thenceforth knew their own importance.

At this moment they were the only soldiers in

Havana. The regular troops were all in the field with the Captain-General; but there were ten thousand Volunteers at the capital. When these men heard that a party of Cuban youths had profaned the tomb of Gonzalo Castañón, their rage at once mounted high. Before morning of the 26th, rumors of some terrible calamity were abroad. People gathered on the streets looking askant at the uniformed men who galloped or marched about, and early in the day it was known that the Volunteers meditated vengeance. As it was certain that the authorities dared resist no demand of their imperious subordinates, the friends of the lads were appalled at the possibilities that impended.

The day wore on, and toward the close a review of the entire Volunteer force was held by General Crespo, the *Segundo Cabo*, or Second in Command, and in the absence of the Captain-General, the highest personage on the island. More than once during the parade the cry arose, "*Mueran los Traidores*"—"Death to the Traitors;" and at the close, deputations from several battalions followed Crespo to the palace. They were admitted to his presence, and laid their complaints before him. Four-and-twenty hours had now elapsed, they said, since the students had been arrested, and proceedings had not yet been taken to convict them. The confidence of the Volunteers in the authorities was shaken. They believed there was an intention to save or shield the prisoners, and they demanded the immediate shooting of the whole forty-five.

Meanwhile the throngs from the review had followed direct to the palace, in the *Plaza de Armas*. The palace is an imposing structure, built in the style common in Southern Europe in the sixteenth century, of a yellow

stucco, with balconies on the upper stories, and pillars and colonnades below. In front is a square planted with palms and Indian laurels, and surrounded with stately buildings, most of which are used for official purposes. The palace fills one side of the square, with a façade of two hundred feet or more. Into this plaza before evening the dark-browed, dark-skinned Southerners began to crowd, bringing their weapons and wearing their uniforms. Their officers hurried after, to incite sometimes and sometimes to appease.

But the soldiers refused to be appeased. Messengers were sent into the palace, and the weak representatives of power inquired the will of the mob. Nothing but blood would satisfy the infuriated animals; for a Spaniard of the lower sort, fed on bull-fights, is nothing but an animal when his passions, of whatever nature, are aroused. They were like a crowd of beasts that have scented prey, and these wretched Cuban boys must be thrown out to them.

Meanwhile the entire creole population was horror-stricken. The students belonged to the very flower of Cuban youth; their parents were among the most important native citizens. The lads themselves were charming, fresh, enthusiastic fellows, with thousands of friends. Hardly a house of the better sort in Havana where one of them had not been an inmate or a visitor. One father hurried to the authorities and literally offered the weight of his son in gold as a ransom, and the authorities would have accepted the price: but the mob was implacable.

The troops were threatening now to burn the palace. They rushed to the prison doors, shouting and sounding hoarse trumpets into the night; the cries and the

roll of the drums intermingled with intervals of silence more terrible still. While the deputies were consulting within, fresh battalions arrived each hour. More than once they strove to burst the doors of the gaol. The bells of the prison rang from time to time, and Volunteers drove through the streets in the half-open cabs, called *coches* in Havana, blowing their cornets to arouse their fellows. The deputations went constantly to and from the palace and the crowd, and the tumult under the balconies was incessant. Three thousand Volunteers were at last assembled. The shouts were no longer sufficient, and through brazen trumpets they cried for the blood of little Alonzo Alvarez de la Campa, the boy who had plucked a rose.

At last Crespo yielded to the clamor, and not waiting for morning, consented to name a court or council of captains of the army, with a colonel for president, to proceed immediately to the trial.

And now the crowds in the plaza hurried by every street and lane and avenue to the prison. They swarmed into the area that surrounds the huge yellow building, and filled the square and the spaces on every side, all armed, and shouting with tireless zeal; and while the court held its session within, a perpetual court or council of horror on the outside cried incessantly for the death of the accused.

From the hour when the proceedings began, there were constant deputations from the battalions to visit the court and convince it of its duty. Two general officers of the army attempted to pacify the multitude, but the mutineers shut up the veterans in the hospital of the prison. Lopez Roberts himself, when he came to the court, was received with vociferous abuse, for he had

delayed the proceedings—and therefore the result—a day. They bayoneted one of the horses of his carriage, and would have killed the Governor but for the guards, who, however, could not restrain the mob from crushing his hat over his shoulders. He, too, was forced to hide himself in the hospital. Even the guardian of Castañon's children, who proclaimed the innocence of the accused, was reproached and denounced by the rabble.

Crespo remained in the palace. He was tempted, he said, to go down and strive to appease the crowd, but allowed his advisers to dissuade him, lest authority should suffer in his person.

At midnight the session began. Before the court was laid the declaration of the custodian of the cemetery, then the statement of the prisoners; but there was no accuser, no witness, no proof, only a vague report showing the damnable errors or intentions of Lopez Roberts, the Political Governor.

The defender of the prisoners was a captain in the army, worthy of the highest fame that Spanish soldier or gentleman ever attained, Federico R. y Capdevilla—let his name be honored! He argued with eloquence and courage and splendid devotion to duty and honor, asserting in the plainest and boldest words that it was an outrage to condemn “without conviction, without proof, without fact, without anything approaching evidence of the pretended crime.” He declaimed against the rancor, the violence, the frenzy of a parcel of mutineers, “for I cannot even conceive of them as fanatics who, trampling on equity and justice, and on the very principles of authority, abuse even force to impose it upon reason and law.”

"My obligation as a Spaniard, my sacred duty as a defender, my honor as a gentleman and a soldier, compel me to protect and shield the innocent—and there are forty-five to be defended ; to defend these children, who have hardly emerged from boyhood, have just entered upon that youth in which there is yet no hate, no vengeance, no passion. What are you going to expect from children? for you cannot call them men. You cannot judge them as men, these striplings of fourteen, sixteen, eighteen—more or less. But even if you judge them as men, where is the accusation—where is the proof of the crime ?

"Gentlemen : From the opening of the session I have been present. I have heard the reading of the report, the declarations, the verbal charges, and either I am utterly incompetent and ignorant, or there is nothing, absolutely nothing, of culpability. Before entering this hall I heard rumors without number that the students had committed sacrilege and desecration in the cemetery ; but in the name of truth be it said, nothing of this has appeared in the proceedings.

"Gentlemen : Before all things we are honorable soldiers, we are gentlemen. Honor is our motto, our pride, our device, and like Spain, always honor, always nobleness, always gentility ; never passion, baseness, or fear. The punctilious soldier will die at his post. Well, then, let them assassinate us ; but the lovers of order, of society, the nations of the earth, will dedicate to us an immortal memory."

Before this noble soldier could complete his task, the Volunteers in the court-room were shouting to drown his voice, and one bolder than the rest attempted to strike him in the face, but the officer defended himself with

his sword. The president commanded that he should be concealed in a neighboring house, and in the courtyard without they cried for the head of the Captain Capdevilla.

Amid ceaseless uproar and outcry the court closed its proceedings. It found the prisoners guilty of profanation, and imposed the penalty prescribed by the law for the offence—a fine of 1,250 dollars, and what is called “the greater imprisonment.”

Then indeed the rage of the Volunteers knew no bounds. They had assembled to obtain the death of the students, and to celebrate it; they were waiting to see the boys led out to punishment; they did not conceive it possible that the victims should be allowed to live when they wished them to die. Deputations again hurried to Crespo to inform him of their disapproval, their indignation, their demand for another court. The tumult was portentous, and Crespo made haste to be complaisant. Ignoring every principle of justice and law, he named immediately a new council, under the presidency of a colonel, with six members from the army, and nine from these very Volunteers who were demanding the blood of the prisoners. The excitement of the soldiers then became delight; confidence in their triumph returned when they found their leaders given authority over the lives of the accused.

They entered the hall now in crowds, not in deputations, soldiers as well as officers, while in the square without arose again the cry of indignation because they were not even yet sufficiently obeyed. They had rejected one court because it was not cruel enough in its judgments; the law that it personified was not that to which they conformed. In the permanent council of war

which they demanded there must be no law, no judgment, but death to the forty-five.

At dawn the prisoners were ordered to find defenders; but who would defend them after the treatment and the danger of Capdevilla? The lads selected from the lists presented persons whose names were unknown to them.

At five in the morning they were placed in file at the entrance of the council hall, so that they could be passed in, one after another, to ratify their previous declarations or answer the new questions put to them. Here they remained until noon, under guard of the prison sentinels. During all this time a stream of Volunteers, renewed each moment, was marching by, glaring at them as if they were beasts, hurling objurgations and obscene taunts, showing them the bullets in their cartridges, and by their ragged, bloody garments, betokening that they had already begun to celebrate the conclusion of the trial.

Again the declarations were read and the questions put, but still not one proof of crime was found. Some inquiry was made into the political opinions of the striplings, and they were asked which of them wore diamonds on their persons, with which they might have scratched the glass over Castañon's tomb. Then, amid threats and shouts, they were returned to their prison.

The defenders were weak or false: they said the case was hopeless, that there was no defence; in fact, they were cowards. And this time the president and the army officers were equally dastard. The court deliberated, not upon the guilt or innocence of the accused; not whether the tomb of Castañon was intact—as to that no deliberation was possible; not upon the justice

of the punishment to be imposed ; but upon the number of victims that would satisfy the fury of the mutineers. Finally they determined to propose to the mob to sentence eight to death, this number being obtained by a division of the entire company by five, excluding one American and one Volunteer, who by chance were found among the prisoners, and three others who were Spaniards. The legality of the sentence was determined by the impatience of the seditious, and the number of the guilty by the fury of the Volunteers.

Having weighed out the quantity of flesh that would appease the hunger of these beasts of prey, the president and the members of the court went out to the multitude. The blast of a cornet called attention, and a sudden silence ensued. But one blast indicated one victim, and immediately a renewed outcry arose, and shouts of "Death to the Council" mingled with those that called for the murder of the accused. The tumult lasted till a second blast, similar to the first, was heard, and a new stillness followed. Some one should explain ; one more head had been offered to the mob. But clamor more terrible, if possible, followed the second silence. The cries of "*Muera el Consejo*"—"Death to the Council"—had more insistence, and ceased not till a third blast summoned attention again. The shouting was hushed only a moment to break out with redoubled fury. Seven times the cornet sounded, and a tremendous vociferation followed each temporary stillness. Then the cornet blew the eighth blast, and then five thousand men shouted "*Viva el Consejo*." The uproar augmented after the *vivas*, but it was different now. The eighth head had been granted. Enough

blood for one day to quench the thirst of the Volunteers. The horrible maximum of the sentence was reached.

Eight were to die, and in this way the court designated the victims. Alonzo Alvarez de la Campa merited the sentence first. He had plucked the flower in the cemetery. He had confessed it. They had demanded his life with trumpets in the horrible night of the 26th. What greater proof of guilt could the court desire? Four others followed in the decree of the judges. They had played with the cart. They had declared it. They had ratified their declaration. What more could the council want before sentencing them to death?

Still, three more names were needed, for eight had been promised. And the court had no other cart, and no other flower. The others were determined by lot; guilt and justice settled by chance. The horrible game of life was played, and three more names responded to the die. One name, however, was that of a lad who had not been at the university on the 22d. He had declared it, and all the other declarations confirmed him. But eight had been promised. Time pressed. The Volunteers without were hoarse with shouting. The lottery had decided, and the number was complete.

Thirty-five, however, remained, for whom other punishment must be devised. Without delay or discussion, this was determined. Eleven were condemned to six years of imprisonment, twenty to four years, and the four remaining to six months of "minor imprisonment," three of these being native Spaniards. Two had already been released, the American and the Volunteer.

Innocent all, the innocence of any real crime recognized by the first court—no reason was assigned why

some were condemned to six years' imprisonment and others to four. The only explanation was that the older ones were to suffer two years more than the younger. All under the same conditions, the same accusations, the court seemed to consider those most guilty who had lived most years.

Next, all were condemned to confiscation of their property, although a law of Spain expressly prohibits such a penalty ; and no law of the kingdom, nor decree, nor ordinance, nor jurisdiction authorizes the punishment of death for children of sixteen. The law also prohibits a second penalty for a single crime ; yet those condemned to death or imprisonment all suffered the second penalty of confiscation of their property.

At one in the afternoon the court signed the sentence. A deputation, with Captain Gener, of the Volunteers, for president, carried it to Crespo, at the palace of the Captain-General. He signed it promptly ; the representative of the King of Spain put his name to the decree. and Gener instantly rushed to the balcony and read the sentence to the Volunteers. Did ever judge before perform such task ? He read the names of the victims and announced that execution would be immediate. Shouts of applause went up from the greedy multitude that hastened now to the prison, agitated with confused delight, satisfied at last.

The boys, meanwhile, waited an hour before they learned their fate—an anxious hour, but no more anxious than those of all the night and all the day. Everything denoted the speedy consummation of the crime. They could see through the gratings, which in Cuba are substituted for ordinary doors, that the cell devoted to the condemned was guarded by Volunteers—an indica-

tion that it was to be occupied ; but as yet they knew not which were to die. Without, the barbarous festival was splendid. The bands on the square were playing triumphant airs. The battalions drank, they sang—and to sing at that moment was infamous ; but they sang. All the Volunteers in Havana were there. None were willing to miss the feast.

At last Gener came to the entrance and called to three of the prisoners. The others, who had confessed, had been separated before. Then the lads knew which brothers they were to lose. But the gallant condemned embraced the others, and declared that they died content, for their death was the salvation of their friends.

They were manacled.

At four in the afternoon the eight were in the condemned cell, and the priests were permitted to enter. Half an hour was allowed for the rites of religion. Then the eight passed the grating, and their comrades bade them the last farewell. Alonzo, the martyr of sixteen years, walked first. They all smiled as they passed by. One was sixteen, three seventeen, one nineteen.

They were forced to kneel, and, last indignity, they were ordered to be shot in the back like traitors.

The drum was silent—a moment of terrible and mortal silence. Then the sound of a discharge of musketry. Three times the volley was repeated—and the souls of the children had flown to a purer world. One mother went mad that day.

Alonzo had died as Triay had foretold. His father had paid for the arms of the company that shot him.

Before those gentle bodies filed all the battalions, music playing. Spain was avenged.

The mutilated corpses were taken to the cemetery, escorted by a company of Volunteers. Their families were not permitted to bury them, and the bodies were borne by convicted criminals.

The eight were murdered at five minutes past five, and at half-past five the committee returned to notify the others of their fate. At that moment those destined to imprisonment were shackled. Marching two and two behind each other, they proceeded through the streets of Havana, where they were known, where they had sauntered and played and kept holiday, the Volunteers shouting all the way, "*A las Canteras!*"—"To the Quarries"—till the door of their new prison was shut upon them. Then their clothes were changed for felon's garb, their heads were shaved like those of the criminals who had preceded them; for bed they had the miserable mattress of the bridewell, and from that day the names by which they were known were the numbers that could be read upon their clothes.

On the morning of the 28th of November they were marched again through the streets of their own Havana, surrounded by spectators, who mocked at them as the Jews did at Christ, till they arrived at the quarries of San Lazaro, on the outskirts of the city. In that huge mass of stone they fulfilled the terrible imprecations of the day before—"A las Canteras!" "To the Quarries!" "Away with them." Into their delicate hands were thrust the heaviest of hammers, and breaking, raising stone, suffering the outrages of taskmasters paid by the Volunteers to chastise them especially, working without rest, submitting to cudgels and insults worse than death—this was the life of the *canteras*.

They passed three months in the *canteras* ; three months of struggle between the weakness of their young bodies and the strength of their young souls ; three months in which they could scarcely eat ; three months in which their backs were bent beneath repeated blows ; three centuries of martyrdom to their mothers.

Three months, then, in the pleasure-grounds of the Captain-General, to make paths and summer-houses and private theatres for his Excellency. And then the indignation of the world forced the Madrid Government to pardon them. The decree sanctioned all that had passed, and committed the King and his ministers to participation in the crime. It approved every action of the authorities or the Volunteers, and again condemned the innocent, both dead and living, before it freed the prisoners.

But even yet the hate of the Volunteers was not appeased. They threatened to kill every one of the students who should appear in the streets of Havana, and when the lads were taken from the penitentiary a hundred other convicts were marched with them to the wharves, to hide them in the crowd. There a launch was waiting to convey them to a Spanish man-of-war by night. On this they were safe till they could be put aboard a steamer which took them to Spain. For in their native Havana they might not remain.

The foregoing narrative is a condensation of the story of one of the prisoners, published in Madrid, in 1873, under the title of " Los Voluntarios de la Habana." It is absolute history, not romance.

CONSPIRACY.

CHAPTER I

CONDITION OF CUBA.

IT was eight years after the events just narrated. The rebellion had been quelled, the Cubans had returned to their allegiance. Submission was absolute, and rewarded by oppression as absolute. There were not, it is true, so many imprisonments or confiscations for political cause as during the war, but a system of financial tyranny prevailed, legal and illegal, which was destroying the resources of the island, reducing the rich man to bankruptcy and the poor man to beggary, and goading the entire population to desperation and political crime. Every class was aggrieved and resentful, from the wealthiest planters and merchants down through all the grades of shopkeepers, mechanics, and day-laborers, to the miserable wretches at the bottom of all. Even the resident Spaniards shared the universal discontent, for they had made the repression of the Insurrection possible, and were repaid by taxation and tyranny as heavy as any imposed on the rebellious Cubans. There was no distinction made by the rapacious officials; they took from all. The government tax was greater than the revenue of the country, and, in

addition to this, an illegal imposition was laid in a thousand forms of extortion and spoliation upon the helpless population of the island.

But these were not the only evils of the time. Emancipation had been proclaimed by the rebels during the war, and enforced by the victorious Spaniards afterward. It was gradual in its operation, but had now been nearly consummated, and hundreds of thousands of slaves had been set free, most of whom had been barbarously treated by their former masters, and with many the recollection rankled, while nearly all were destitute of the restraints of education or religion. When the planters should become unable to employ or to pay these people, the question of their subsistence and control would be a terrible one.

The poor whites of the interior presented almost as formidable a problem. They were a brutish, degraded race, requiring hardly a single garment and no fuel for warmth, and often only an orange or a plantain for food. The huts in which they dwelt were of the rudest sort, for the climate makes protection needless, except in the hurricanes, when no protection would suffice. They were dogged and slothful, yet full of ill-temper, dissatisfaction, and animal passion. This population retained enough of the nature of civilized man to hate the oppressor and detest those who had conquered them. They could be roused; and although of necessity they submitted to the hated presence of the Spanish officials who patrolled the country and were supposed to constitute a sort of police, the air where they lived was full of discontent and anger, muffled, but not the less to be despised.

Dissatisfaction extended to the towns. The destitu-

tion there was not indeed so conspicuous, but when absolute want came to those accustomed to something better than the life of the brutes in the field, it was less endurable. Strikes of cabmen and cartmen in Havana interfered with what little business remained. When the great merchants became bankrupt they dragged down smaller ones with them. Banks for the savings and deposits of the humbler classes were unable to meet their obligations, and their failure precipitated the misery that every one saw was imminent. Defalcations were numerous, and corrupt directors of public institutions committed suicide. The factors refused to advance upon the crops, and the planters were unable to raise money to work their estates.

Nevertheless, the Spaniards persisted in their career of oppression. Protests and appeals were offered by the highest merchants and bankers to the Captain-General, to the Madrid government, to the King himself; but fresh and often harsher inflictions were the only response. Public demonstrations were made, public meetings were held, and demands presented for the removal of officials more obnoxious than the rest; but if these demands were complied with by the supreme authorities on the island, who being present saw the danger, they were overruled in Spain, and the offensive subordinates returned in higher place. Threats of assassination became rife, and rumors of risings in the interior. Political processions were prohibited; radical newspapers were repressed and their editors imprisoned, but the license of the press was still great and often unpardonable in its personality, the natural result of a situation so intolerable.

To all this there seemed no prospect of a termina-

tion. The attempt to achieve independence had utterly failed, and there was no reason to suppose that another, if unaided, would prove more successful. The United States, the only hope of the Cubans, was evidently disinclined to interfere, and entertained no immediate desire to possess the island. Although the American republic would certainly never permit the transfer of Cuba to another power than Spain, it was in no way anxious to incorporate the population with its own, and quite able to await the course of events, or to control them if they took a turn unfavorable to its interests. Discontent and despair were universal. Every one believed that the present state of affairs could not continue. Every one anticipated in the near future—famine, brigandage, perhaps a war of races or a servile insurrection, anarchy, general and individual ruin.

CHAPTER II

THE PLANTATION OF CASA-NUOVA.

It was late in the afternoon of an April day. The sun was gilding the tops of the western palms, and the delicious coolness that comes at this hour in the tropics almost compensated for the sultriness that was past. A dozen or more young Cubans of the humbler sort were riding cautiously along one of the rough bridle-paths that serve for roads in the interior of the island. They were mounted on the small and shaggy ponies native to the country, beasts without much beauty, but with qualities of speed and endurance worth to their masters more than looks. Most of the riders were men between twenty and thirty years of age, carelessly dressed, with broad slouched hats, loose linen jackets thrown open to expose the shirt, breeches, high boots, and dangling spurs. All were armed with pistols in their holsters or at their belts, and all carried the *machete*—a short straight sword, broad in the blade but coming to a point, and suitable either for hacking or thrusting an enemy. They were rough in manner and appearance, their garments soiled, as if the wearers might have lain out often at night, and their dark skins and flashing eyes, their mobile features and expressive gesticulation, betokened their Southern origin. As they made their way slowly they peered into the woods or glanced eagerly across the

cane, occasionally looking back, or even halting as if to listen for an expected sound.

At their head rode one, evidently of higher rank, who looked like a leader, sitting his horse gracefully, and half turning, at times, to question or command his followers. He was a man of twenty-eight or thirty years, somewhat above the medium height, and more robust than many of his race, but his hands and feet were smaller than a woman's, and exquisitely shaped, like those of all his band. He, like them, was swarthy in complexion, and his dark eyes, like theirs, could be fierce or soft by turns; but his strongly marked features indicated energy rather than vivacity of feeling, and an air of authority distinguished him from most of his compatriots. He was richly, even showily dressed; his breast was crossed by a broad red sash, and almost covered with medals and stars; his gauntlets were embroidered, and the housings of his horse were decorated with silver. He looked like the hero of an opera; but in Cuba one meets these heroes on the highway.

This was Carlos Agüero de la Campa, the chief of the creole partisans, and the brother of little Alonzo, who had been murdered by the Volunteers. The boy had been his pet and playmate, and the shock of his death had left an ineffaceable impression on the memory and character of the man. Agüero had fed the bitterness of his own grief by contemplating the wrongs of his countrymen, and nursed his indignation through all these years, and it was the object of his life to avenge his brother and his race.

He had already made several attempts to incite the Cubans, and found not a few followers; but as yet his exploits were confined to acts very nearly approaching

brigandage, always, however, discriminating between Spaniards and Cubans in his inflictions. This, he said to himself, was his only course. It was only by making the Spanish rule intolerable that he could goad his compatriots into resistance; it was by displaying the weakness of the government, its inability to preserve internal peace or to protect the meanest citizen, that he could rouse them to rise against it. He hoped by disturbing the country to induce others to combine with him in a better organized movement, and in the end bring about a state of affairs which the Spaniards could neither repress nor control. He knew, too, that he should excite the authorities to acts of reprisal and revenge, which would increase the disaffection of the creoles. He was a man of ideas, and had studied the situation closely; and though neither by nature nor education inclined to the career he had adopted, he had no doubt that he was justified by the condition of the country, and that events would raise him from the position of a brigand to that of a leader of revolution, and possibly a successful one.

Aguero had qualities that fascinated and dominated his countrymen. He had deliberately adopted the dashing style of dress the creoles fancy; perhaps, indeed, he shared their preference for it. There was a captivating manner about him, a tenderness at times in his glance and a sweetness in his smile, to which the roughest of his subordinates succumbed, while the women, of course, admired his beauty and found him irresistible. They sympathized, too, with his personal hate for the Spaniard, for the Cuban women are even more intense in their patriotism than the men. But he made no attempt to engage their affections seriously.

If he amused himself with them at rare intervals, it was an amusement only, not a passion ; and though he knew his own attractions, he employed them only to foster and fasten his authority, not to gratify his vanity or excite a personal interest.

He had more than once been captured and sent out of the country, and quite recently had been arrested in Florida by the United States authorities, on the charge of plotting an expedition against the neighboring island. He was brought before a tribunal, which could find no evidence against him, and dismissed the case, and three days afterward Aguero sailed in a schooner from Key West under the eyes of the very authorities that had pronounced him innocent.

Shortly before this escapade the Consul-General at Havana had telegraphed to his government that twenty highwaymen had started from Caibairien for the United States. These also were arrested on their arrival, and also discharged, there being, it was declared, no reason to detain them. As soon as they were released they joined Aguero at Key West, and formed part of the band with which he landed on the Cuban coast, in the neighborhood of San Juan de los Remedios. Adherents were waiting with horses and provisions, and in two days his company numbered fifty members. The skill with which he had eluded the officials of the United States was exasperating, and the American Government at once sent out revenue-cutters and men-of-war in search of him, after he had landed, while the Captain-General of the island distributed troops east and west of Havana for a hundred miles, to resist a debarkation, long after Aguero was riding with his band in the palm groves of the interior.

The common people were with him, and neither blacks nor whites attempted to betray him. He rode about openly, disappearing when he was warned of the approach of regular troops; supplied by the population with food and shelter, or taking by force from those allied to the Spaniards or suspected of such affiliations. There were, however, many who did not dare avow their secret wish for revolution, and who were even willing to suffer at his hands, if only he could succeed in overthrowing the hated despotism. He committed no murders, but engaged the Spanish troops whenever his force was sufficient. His claim and cry were that he was not a brigand, but a patriot, stirring up the country to a turmoil, out of which revolution might arise.

He was on his way now to the *ingenio* * of the Conde de Casa-Nueva, one of the most important Spaniards on the island, the owner of several plantations, head of an ancient family, and in full sympathy with the government. This nobleman had married an American lady, long since dead, and their son had been educated in the United States. The youth had become an American citizen, but was, nevertheless, heartily in accord with the Cubans, and Aguero had seduced him into a promise to join the partisans. The chief had more than political reasons for his efforts to gain over this young man. The conde was the same colonel of Volunteers who presided over the court that had condemned his brother, and there was revenge as well as retaliation in converting this man's son into a rebel—

* Strictly speaking, the *ingenio* is the grinding-house, but the word is very generally used in Cuba for the plantation itself.

in subjecting Casa-Nueva's child to the possibility of the fate that had been inflicted on Alonzo. Agüero did not, indeed, contemplate treachery toward his expected comrade, but he was more anxious to enlist him than he had ever been to secure any other recruit, and besides the mortification and horror which the guilt of the son would occasion the father, the chief confessed to himself a certain satisfaction in the thought that the conde might be compelled to endure the very agony with which he had tortured others. Agüero went eagerly to the rendezvous with the young creole, who, he hoped, would that night become his follower.

As the party approached a grove of palms and plantains, the remains of a deserted plantation on the banks of a turgid stream, Agüero halted his companions. They were within a few miles of the ingenio, where he expected to meet his new colleague, and he bade them remain concealed until his return, a few hours later. The men entered the grove, and, dismounting, unsaddled their horses and stretched themselves on the sward. A ration of plantains was snatched from the trees, and the milk of the *coco* or the water of the stream appeased their thirst, for the creoles are abstinent. One was stationed near the road as an outpost, and the remainder brought out cards from their holsters to while away the hours till it became too dark for any occupation but conversation or slumber.

There were no troops within twenty or thirty miles, for the band had marched eastward from Santa Clara the night before, and was now in a district without railways, where the ordinary roads are bad beyond the conception of those who have travelled only in civilized lands. It was a rainy season, the mud was deep, the

rivers were high, and Agüero had destroyed the bridges. The whole region was supposed to be favorable to the insurgents, if such they could be called, and the chief would be in no danger, although alone. It was nearly nightfall when he reached the plantation where the rendezvous was appointed.

On a rising ground beyond a mass of light-green cane, that stretched unbroken for a thousand acres, the boundaries marked only by long lines of palm, stood the residence of the Conde de Casa-Nueva. The buildings formed a little village by themselves; the negro huts laid out in a street, the grinding-house, a large brick structure with a towering chimney, and the master's dwelling with its dependencies. On the left, as one approached, was the garden, covering an acre or two of ground. It was little more than a grove of tropical plants and trees, originally grouped with some degree of taste, but now rank and overgrown. Large gaudy flowers, scarlet-leaved, and gorgeous sprigs of yellow were in bloom; green cocoanuts dangled on the smaller palms, oranges gleamed through the foliage, plantains—bananas we call them—hung heavily in enormous clusters from their slender stalks, and a multitude of fruits unknown except in the tropics were growing in a wilderness of verdure. A peacock stalked in the unweeded walks, statues of naked nymphs and busts of Spanish sovereigns were scattered among the trees, and in the centre of the garden stood an aviary containing half-a-dozen pigeons, a screaming parrot in green and gold, and a whole covey of smaller birds. Iron seats were arranged at intervals in the alleys, but the place looked dank, and the odors it exhaled were oppressive; all was luxuriant, but unkempt and uninvit-

ing, for the Cuban gardens are seldom visited by their owners.

The house was low, with only a single story, but long and deep. It was built of stone with a stucco front, and a veranda running the whole length was approached by one or two steps from the ground. The long, reed curtains, that when the sun is high are used to screen the porch and inner rooms from the glare and heat of day, were raised. The windows, spacious, unglazed apertures, with wooden shutters and perpendicular gratings reaching from the ceiling to the floor, were all thrown open, and two or three lofty rooms within exposed. There were no carpets nor curtains, the furniture was scanty, the seats were of cane, the tables of marble uncovered with cloth. A piano-forte, a few books, flowers on the tables and prints on the walls, were the only indications of luxury or refinement; but in a long room at the back, running across the house, a table was laid for half-a-dozen persons, gleaming with silver and decorated with fruits and flowers. Beyond this *comedor*, or dining-room, which was not separated from the principal apartment by any wall, masses of oleander and cactus formed the background, and behind these in the distance appeared the tops of a line of palms.

Aguero was startled as he advanced to discover a party of four seated in the veranda, enjoying the evening air—the Conde de Casa-Nueva, his son and daughter, and a visitor. All rose in the Cuban provincial fashion when he approached, and the conde, in a linen suit and broad straw hat, came down the steps to greet the stranger, calling a negro to hold Aguero's horse. The brigand had not expected to meet his enemy, and the sight of the man whom he regarded as the murderer of

his brother moved him profoundly. But he recognized his danger, and succeeded in repressing any indication of his feelings. Doffing his hat and saluting the company with a sweeping bow, he exclaimed at once, with complete self-possession: "Señor Conde, do you know that the brigand Aguero is in the neighborhood? I have come to warn you."

"Ah," replied the conde, "I thought so. I came from Havana to-day to protect my house, and brought a company of Volunteers. To-morrow I hope to catch the rascal and take him back to the Morro. Where do you suppose he is hiding?"

"About ten miles south-west of here," said the brigand (his camp being in exactly the opposite direction). "I heard of him as I rode from Santa Clara. There was news of him yesterday in the town where I live, and the Governor asked me to notify you that he was moving this way. I suspected he was hiding in the woods at Escambray, and sent a negro to explore. He brought me word that fifteen men with horses were halting there till evening, when they mean to attack this ingenio."

"We shall not wait for them," said the old soldier. "I have a whole company with me, and we shall be more than a match for the brigand if he has only fifteen men, or even twenty-five. I am inclined to think, however, that his band is larger."

"These rumors are always exaggerated," said Aguero; "but, in any event, a whole company, with the Conde de Casa-Nueva at the head, will be sufficient. Those fellows never fight well; they only plunder and murder."

"True, indeed," exclaimed the Spaniard; "they are

a cowardly set, and led by a cowardly chief. They all deserve to be shot without a trial."

"I hope you may catch them," replied the brigand; "and I beg to offer my poor assistance—Jesus del Monte, at your service."

"Thanks, indeed, señor, we shall be glad to have your aid. 'Tis a pity you did not bring the negro, so that we could march direct upon the band."

"Oh, they would not remain where he saw them. We shall meet them on the road. There is hardly a chance of their escaping us, if we move in the direction of Escambray."

"Well, after dinner, Señor del Monte, we can arrange our plans. Let me present you to my family. My daughter, Doña Catalina, my son, Carlos, and Don Ramon de Arriete, aide-de-camp to the Captain-General."

The young woman to whom Agüero was thus presented was taller and statelier than many of the high-born creoles, with classic features and a noble form. Her jet-black hair and eyes betrayed the Andalusian breed, but her fair complexion she doubtless owed to her American mother. She lacked, perhaps, the quick variety of expression common to her countrywomen, and had little of the extravagant gesticulation characteristic of the Southern races; but her ordinary bearing was a sufficient index to her sentiments and moods, and when she became aroused her whole face and figure were significant of the highest emotion.

She was dressed in white with a simplicity bordering on severity, and wore her hair loosely floating over her shoulders. She looked indeed like one born to affect the destinies of nations, and she had been thrust by Fate on this obscure and unhappy island. But she was a true

Hija de Cuba—a “Daughter of Cuba.” Notwithstanding the sympathies of her father with Spain, notwithstanding her Spanish blood—drawn from grandees of the time of Ferdinand and Isabella—Catalina’s strongest feeling was her love for her native island, and a passionate desire for its delivery from overwhelming miseries. She was some years older than her brother, and, so far as she could, had inspired him with her own feeling. Carlos, indeed, since his return to Cuba, had been entirely under her influence. He was a handsome fellow, full of fine instincts, enthusiastic, like all young Cubans, in his devotion to the island, but absolutely free from the horrible hate which so many creole sons entertain for a Spanish father.

The conde filled his high position creditably, according to his lights; he was faithful to his king and to the traditions of his rank, but harsh in his determination to resist rebellion; not cruel by nature, although in the hour of public and passionate alarm his weakness had become vindictive. He had, indeed, forgotten the offence which Agüero had never forgiven. It is always those who inflict a wrong who are the first to condone it.

Casa-Nueva was not a keen observer, and though fond of his children and aware of their political preferences, he had not guessed their force or extent; the son, so very young, not twenty-two, he thought he could control, and Catalina was a woman, and counted for nothing in his calculations.

Lieutenant Arriete, the other member of the group, was a relative, as well as aide-de-camp of the Captain-General, detailed to accompany the conde on his present visit to the interior. He was a charming, high-

spirited young officer, sent out to the Antilles to better his fortune: He possessed ability and accomplishments, a graceful manner and elevated sentiments, and he was very much in love with Catalina.

When dinner was announced they all walked in through the first *sala*, as it is called, to the comedor, an oblong room, open at the back, where a crowd of black servants in white clothes were waiting. It was not yet dark enough for lamps or candles, the air was soft and balmy, and the subtle odors from the garden floated in on the evening breeze. Aguero was placed by the side of Catalina, and opposite her father, who sat facing the sala. The girl had known from her brother of his appointment with the brigand, and when the conde so unexpectedly returned, it had been agreed that they should await the chief in the veranda and find means, if possible, to warn him or extricate him from his danger. But Aguero's adroitness required no aid from others, and increased the admiration for his ability which Catalina already entertained.

Seizing the earliest opportunity, the brigand said to her in an undertone: "I have so long wished for this honor—to speak to a Cuban lady, who sees that I am not a robber and a highwayman." She gave him a glance that spoke volumes, without one spark of coquetry, but with more than patriotic fervor, for she was a woman. That glance caused Aguero a strange sensation, and the man, hitherto impenetrable, was touched and moved. Catalina, on her side, was not indifferent to the attractions that fascinate her sex. This handsome, graceful, dashing man, the representative of Cuban nationality, coming to her in the dusk of

the evening, like a flashing picture—this realization of her fancies seated by her side, talking to her of independence—affected her imagination. The fire was struck, and before she knew it she was involved.

“You know my sentiments,” she replied. “I am ready always to do whatever is in my power for my unhappy country. I am especially glad to say,” she continued, urged by an impulse she could not control, “that I understand your position. There is no way to succeed but that which you have chosen. I do not think you could do otherwise; and I thank you for your moral courage.”

The girl blushed deeply as she spoke, for she had already said more than she intended, or than she had even thought before; but the contagion of the moment drew her on, and she believed now, though she had doubted before, that Agüero was right in his course. The brigand was not a brigand, but a patriot.

Her companion looked his thanks, his gratification, and even something like a warmer feeling; but before he could express himself in words he was interrupted by a remark from the conde. The general conversation, however, gave them a chance to say much to each other. When Agüero talked with the conde or with Carlos of the condition of the island, or discussed affairs in Spain with the aide-de-camp, his remarks were meant for the woman by his side; and more than once she responded, if not in language, by a glance, or sometimes only by the tone in which she uttered apparently indifferent words. He understood her meaning, and thus they carried on an interchange of thought and sentiment that only Carlos could have interpreted, and he only in part.

"What do you think, Señor del Monte," asked the conde, "will be the result of these outbreaks? Shall we soon be able to repress them?"

"Much will depend on the wisdom of our rulers," replied the brigand; and looking at Arriete, "the Captain-General is sagacious, we know, and impressed with the difficulty of the situation. I think a frank report from him to the authorities at Madrid would impress them. I fear the Spanish Government is not sufficiently aware of the critical condition of the country."

"You are right, señor," replied his host, "the people at home have no idea of the danger we are in. And as we are among ourselves," he added, "I will admit that they might do much to alleviate the sufferings of us all."

"Everything depends upon them," said Aguero again, emboldened by this remark, at which, indeed, both Catalina and Carlos were surprised, and Arriete raised his eyebrows. "All depends upon Spain. If the government does not see the crisis, and take measures to avert it, who can answer for the consequences? There is a wide-spread dissatisfaction among the planters themselves, and a far deeper feeling of discontent lower down."

Catalina looked up anxiously, fearing that the guest might compromise himself, and Arriete exclaimed:

"Yes, but I trust this feeling will not ripen into anarchy. These disturbances of which we hear—what can they do for Cuba?"

"They may compel the government to look at the causes that produce them. They may, if the government is not careful, ripen into something more than anarchy—into another attempt at insurrection."

"Yes," said the conde, "and that is why they should

be severely repressed. No measures are too harsh to preserve the public order. While I am most anxious to see the sufferings of the country abated, I am more than indignant at those who seize this opportunity to increase them."

Catalina was now still more alarmed at the turn the conversation was taking, as well as afraid lest Carlos might be impressed by the views of her father, and she turned to Arriete with some inquiry about his aunt, the wife of the Captain-General. There was no other opportunity to take up the dangerous theme. Aguero understood her anxiety, but was again unable to express his appreciation or his thanks. But for this very reason they became more interested in each other. Throughout the dinner each was watching to say something that only one must hear. The contact of the two natures could indeed have but one result, for neither had ever found a compeer in the peculiar circumstances in which they had been placed. But neither, as yet, realized the significance of the feeling that was springing up between them. Catalina, seated by the embodiment of her patriotic dreams, fancied that her interest was only a natural sensation, while the man, more conscious, detected an emotion he had never known before, yet hardly supposed that he, the chief of a great revolutionary movement, had become the subject of a girl.

As they left the dining-room, Aguero found means to indicate to Carlos that he had something to communicate, and the latter inquired if he should show the stranger to a room. It was bare and uncarpeted, like the more public apartments they had left, with neither curtains nor decorations on the lofty walls.

No sooner were they alone than Aguero exclaimed:

"I shall move eastward to-morrow, Carlos. Are you ready to join me?"

"Yes," said the youth, "I have made up my mind. It will pain my father; but I can no longer be a passive witness to the outrages on my countrymen. I will join you this night. Only do not ask me to attack the houses of my friends."

"You should have no friends who are enemies of your country," said Agüero sternly. "Carlos, you must learn," he added, as he saw the youth shrink at the remark—"my dear boy, you must learn that in this matter country is all. You, who desert your father, certainly can afford to do whatever else is required of you. Does not this sister of whom you have told me share my views? Does she not see that the only way to accomplish our great purpose is to subordinate every personal feeling? You leave her, you go directly contrary to the will of your father. How then can you hesitate when it is mere acquaintances whose interests are concerned?"

"Yes," replied the lad; "but to rob and burn their houses, to injure those I have played with, to set fire to the roof that has sheltered me—this is what troubles me. If it were open war——"

"Open war will be precipitated," said the other, "only by these means. Look upon it thus, and your scruples will be allayed. We can rouse the people of Cuba only by making them understand that Spain and Spanish officials cannot protect them, and that we can make head against every attempt to subdue us. Consider, my boy," he continued, with insinuating tenderness, "I have known the same feeling which you describe; but by doing as I urge, we accomplish all. In

every war individuals must suffer. You may fight your dearest friend, if he is of another nation. You must feel that the independence of Cuba is paramount to every other consideration. If you cannot sacrifice all, you are not worthy of us."

The youth was convinced, or overcome; but his head still drooped as he answered, slowly: "I must do as you desire. I will join you this night, and obey you in everything, my chief," he added, looking up proudly at the other. Agüero, who was taller, leaned over and kissed him.

The malice of the bandit was past. He had originally determined to entice the boy more out of vindictive rancor than from any desire to secure a partisan; but now under Casa-Nueva's roof, and especially since he had spoken with Catalina, he was full of compunction. He soothed his conscience, however, by the thought that he was inducing Carlos to serve his country, and he promised himself to screen him from danger as carefully as if it had been that other youth whose death he had once thought that the fate of Carlos might avenge.

It was no compact of Mephistopheles and Faust. It was a stronger nature, itself misled, overcoming and overruling a weaker one. It was, indeed, far nobler in Carlos than in Faust, for there was no temptation offered him of wine or woman, of pleasure or fortune, but simply the generous aim of doing something for his country. Nor was the tempter altogether evil, although he advised to evil. He believed the means he proposed were the only ones to accomplish a great end, and, until we are placed in similar circumstances, let us not judge too harshly. The beginnings of all great revolutions strangely resemble crime.

"Well," said Agüero, "I shall leave here this night, and move eastward. Your father will dispose his force before morning, and when he finds he is not attacked will march to the west, if we can deceive him."

The youth shrank at the idea of deceiving his father. Agüero saw the involuntary movement, and continued, as if he had not observed it:

"You will not have to fight his force." (They clasped hands.) "My band is at the bottom of the hill, beyond the ingenio Santa Rosa. I shall leave almost immediately. When will you join me?"

"An hour before midnight."

"Agreed—I will wait for you;" and they returned to the sala.

"When did you say that Agüero would be here?" asked the conde, as they entered.

"Before midnight," replied the bandit. "You should be making your preparations. If I might suggest, it would be better to move out against him. Where is your company?"

"In a grove behind the ingenio. But I think I will leave my son here with a part, to defend the place in case of need, and take the remainder myself to find Agüero. Do you think you can conduct us?"

"Certainly," replied the other. "But would it not be better that I should go in advance and ascertain the exact position of the enemy?"

He had promised the boy that there should be no conflict with his father, and he meant to keep his word; as much now perhaps for Catalina's sake as for that of Carlos.

There was a short conference after this. Agüero showed some credentials he had obtained, or forged,

from the Governor of Santa Clara, and convinced the cautious colonel that he was to be trusted; and it was finally agreed that Carlos should remain with a dozen men and the servants to guard the house and his sister, while Aguero with the conde and the remainder of the force was to move against the brigands.

The colonel and the aide-de-camp went out to inspect the troops, and Aguero was left with Catalina and her brother. Carlos was immersed in his own thoughts and speculations, and the others sat for a while in, what seemed afterward to both, a very dream, though neither appreciated even yet their interest in the other. Nevertheless, those moments which passed so rapidly they would remember through all their after years. Strange that at the instant we so often do not recognize the circumstances that make the crises of our lives.

After a while a messenger came for Carlos from his father, and the unconscious lovers were alone. Aguero suggested that they should walk into the garden; it was somewhat contrary to Cuban etiquette, but Catalina assented. The moon was rising, and they sauntered in the unweeded alleys and under the palms that threw no heavy shade, talking of Cuba and her destinies.

"Have you any hope," asked Catalina, "that we can induce the United States to intervene?"

"I do not know what to reply," said the chief. "The Americans are so selfish, so absorbed in themselves, so ignorant of their opportunities. We cannot possibly accomplish anything permanent unless they aid us, or at least recognize us. It is to their interest, but they do not perceive this. They think they are secure that Cuba must eventually fall to them, and that they can afford to wait."

"But how unworthy of a great nation," said the woman. "Have they no sympathy with a down-trodden race? They themselves never endured half the wrongs from England that are put upon us by Spain, but they rebelled."

"Ah, they think, 'who would be free, themselves must strike the blow,'" replied the brigand, and Catalina felt the force of the remark.

"Then," she continued, after a moment of silence, "you are doing the only thing possible. You must show that Cubans will not submit to the outrages inflicted on us; and when this is apparent, America will in some way come to our aid."

"That is my belief, señorita," said the brigand. "But pardon me," touching her hand, which was instinctively withdrawn; "I do so heartily and anxiously desire that I may not be regarded as a common highwayman by my countrymen—and countrywomen," he added, with a tenderness that could neither be mistaken nor resisted.

"Your countrymen—and countrywomen," said Catalina, "do not misunderstand you. Be sure of that;" and she offered the hand which a moment before she had withheld. Aguero raised it to his lips, but said no word. "I think my father must be ready," said the señorita; "shall we go in?"

Aguero was in a turmoil of emotion. The quick blood of the tropics was already aroused. He recognized his interest in the daughter of the man who had murdered his brother, and with the rapidity natural in the Southern races, the new passion was even now contending with the old one. "How can I forget Alonzo?" he said to himself; "how can I forgive his murderer?" The

image of the tender lad led out to execution by Casa-Nueva's order rose reproachfully before him and made him recoil from Catalina. Yet when he glanced at her to see if she bore the hateful likeness he was conquered. The demon in him struggled, but was subdued. He felt that he would—he must be loyal to Carlos; for the sake of the sister he must not strike the brother; for the sake of the daughter he must pardon even the father. "If this woman knew," he said, "how much I sacrifice for her, she could not be indifferent." Catalina was not indifferent. She, too, was disturbed, but she had no conception of the tornado that raged in the breast of the partisan.

The conde, meanwhile, had donned his uniform of Volunteers, and the troop was waiting. Agüero's horse was brought up with the others. They mounted and rode off into the stillness, across the sea of waving cane, beyond the barriers of palm. The girl watched them with a curious sensation that she had never known before. All anxiety for her father was strangely dulled by the interest in her new acquaintance. She understood that Agüero would conduct the party away from his own troops, and that no contest was probable; but still, in times like these all things are possible, and she wondered why she was not so anxious as heretofore for what might happen to her father. She flattered herself that it was because the brigand was with him, but in reality her feeling for her father was swallowed up in the new emotion which as yet she had not distinguished from patriotism. They filed off slowly into the distance, as she stood in the veranda, in the soft light and atmosphere of the tropics, and when they had disappeared Catalina sank back into a chair—alone with her thoughts.

She had not sat there long when her brother came out. "Catalina," said he, "I am going to join Agüero. He will leave our father shortly, and move in another direction, toward Gabriel, where I am to meet him. I shall then be a brigand."

"No, no, Carlos; a patriot."

"Do you still urge me, sister?"

"I do, Carlos; with this noble man you cannot be doing wrong."

"Well, if you assure me that this act is worthy of our race——"

"I do, I do, my brother;" and she put her arms around his neck. "Go, and defend your country, and be true to those who lead you." The unconscious sophistry prevailed, and brother and sister were betrayed into a course from which their natures would have recoiled but for their noble sentiments, mixed, in Catalina's case, with the commonest passion of humanity.

"I must leave you, sister," at last cried the young man.

"And when shall I see you again?" asked Catalina.

"Who can tell?"

"She clung to him tenderly, and murmured: "God will return you to me safe, I know he will. Be true and loyal."

"I am, I will be, Catalina," said the youth, and kissed her warmly on the forehead.

One more embrace, long and tender, and they parted. Catalina was again alone. Now, father and brother both were gone, on different sides in the contest which might begin that night, and another, a lover, though

she knew it not, all involved in the strife which was certain to engulf in the end every man on the island.

The conde and his men, all mounted, led by Agüero, proceeded westward, at first through fields of cane and between towering lines of palm, and then by the ordinary road. In about an hour the bandit struck into a thick forest of pine and cedar. The country was hilly and broken, the moon, which was young, had set an hour before, and the sky was now obscured. Agüero at first rode by the side of the conde, but the conversation soon became limited, for riding was difficult in the thicket, and they were occasionally separated in the darkness. Taking advantage of this, while the colonel and Arriete were giving some directions to the men, Agüero pretended that his saddle-girths required adjustment. Dismounting, he said to the troopers next to him that he would rejoin them in a moment, and the party went on, Agüero remaining behind. His absence was not at once discovered by the officers, and the cavalcade had proceeded half a mile or more before the conde sharply inquired: "Where is Señor del Monte?"

"He stopped to arrange his saddle-girths."

"But where? when?—he has not rejoined us. We must wait for him. Go back some of you and find him. You, Lopez, Mendoza, Silva, go at once."

Fifteen or twenty minutes were consumed in the search before it was evident that Agüero had left the company. Then for the first time the conde discovered that he had been deceived. "He is a traitor, a spy," he exclaimed. "He has brought us here so that his band may attack the ingenio. Fool! Why could I not have known it before!"

"What is to be done?" asked Arriete, anxiously.

"We must get out of this thicket at once and back on the main road. We are doubtless led into an ambush. Move to the left, but be careful."

They groped their way cautiously for several minutes, but could not discover their own track in the forest and the darkness. Finally they came upon the brink of a gully overgrown with chaparral. As they descended warily they heard the clatter of cavalry in front, and the colonel ordered a halt. They were now on the edge of a stream that ran through the bottom of the ravine. The water was high, there was no bridge, and after a moment they distinguished on the opposite bank a small body of horsemen apparently prepared to defend the crossing—as well as they could discern through the tangle and the gloom, not half a dozen in number. These could not be friends, and they might be the advance of a much larger force; but the colonel, with the instinct of a soldier, at once gave the order to charge. His men dashed through the thicket with some difficulty, and made their way across the rapid stream. They were so much more numerous that it was impossible for the others to escape. Each party fired a volley, but in the darkness there was no opportunity to aim, and no one appeared to be hurt. Before there was time to reload, the Volunteers had surrounded and captured the whole company of unknown enemies.

The prisoners were brought at once before the conde. They were a detachment of the brigands sent out in quest of Agüero, because of his delay. They had lost their way in the chaparral, missed their chief, and stumbled instead upon the colonel's command. While he was questioning them the conde observed that one

held back more than the others, and he ordered the prisoner forward. The man advanced, but still strove to conceal his features, and the conde said to him, angrily: "Come forward, sir, and show your face. Do I know you?" The brigand then approached still nearer, and the unhappy Spaniard discovered that he had made his own son a prisoner. Carlos had met the party soon after he left the ingenio, and, joining in the search for Aguero, had been captured with the others.

The old man was at first almost overcome, but he succeeded in controlling his emotion, though he could not disguise it. "Carlos, my son," he exclaimed, "what has brought you here? I knew your sympathies, but I did not dream you would become a brigand." Carlos made no reply, and the colonel, in a voice that was harsh and broken by the very effort to appear unmoved, called up an officer.

"This gentleman," he said, "must be considered a prisoner like the rest. Let him be disarmed. We will return at once to the ingenio and take him with us."

The boy was apparently impassive, and the whole party set out for the plantation.

It was past midnight when they arrived. Catalina had retired, supposing that her father had been purposely misled by Aguero, and that no encounter would take place. She rose, however, at the sound of their approach, and met the conde at the threshold. Immediately after him came Carlos, disarmed and under guard. The other brigands were confined in the out-buildings, but Carlos was a prisoner in the house where he had been born. They entered the large and empty sala, where a single light was burning, and Catalina, in a loose robe of white, stood looking anxiously at both,

but hardly daring to speak, for she was afraid to learn the truth.

The conde flung himself into a chair, bewildered and overcome. He had hardly realized until now that his son was his prisoner. Catalina sank at his knees, and comprehended all only too easily. Carlos remained apart, disarmed, with a soldier on either side.

"Oh, my son!" the old man at last exclaimed. "Carlos, I have no resource, I must send you to Havana, to be tried as a common brigand."

"I am not a brigand, father," said Carlos, "and you know it. Every one knows it. But do your duty and send me to Havana. I have taken my chances and lost; and I can pay the forfeit like a man."

Catalina buried her face in her father's knees, and said not a word.

After two or three moments of silence the conde ordered his son to be sent to his own apartment, closely guarded; a soldier was to remain in the room, with strict orders to allow neither exit nor entrance to any one. The father looked at Carlos long and with an effort at calmness, but could not trust himself to utter a word. Catalina threw herself on her brother's neck and kissed him, and thus obtained the chance to say: "Carlos, I love you more than ever." The boy needed no stimulus, but the touch and whisper of his sister nerved him anew; and thus the unhappy family separated.

In the morning they all proceeded to Havana, riding a few miles, and then taking the train, the conde and Catalina in a different car from that of the prisoner.

CHAPTER III.

THE PALACE AT HAVANA.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the wretched party arrived at the Regla, a station on the eastern shore of the bay of Havana. From this point Carlos was conducted by land to the Morro Castle, under orders from the Captain-General, to whom the conde had telegraphed before starting. The father and sister crossed the bay, and proceeded to their home, a stately mansion without the city, with gardens and surroundings suitable to the residence of a man of rank. The carriage drove directly into a paved hall, beyond which was the *patio*—an uncovered court at the centre of the building, surrounded by colonnades and filled with fountains and oleanders and dwarf, fan-like palms. Among the pillars supporting the upper story, two or three servants in white shirts and trousers were making cigarettes, and another, in black clothes, came hurrying down a marble staircase to receive his master at the door.

Catalina was exhausted with fatigue and excitement, and went direct to her own apartment, where she found a note from the Marquesa de Manzanillo, the wife of the Captain-General, inviting her father and herself to dine at the palace the same evening. It was Sunday, and after dinner the marquesa would receive; but as it was Holy Week, there would be no dancing, only a sacred

concert, in which Catalina, who was a superb musician, was invited to take part. She had often assisted on these occasions, but the request seemed mockery now, with her brother imprisoned for an offence that might involve his life. But at the end of the note she read that the American Assistant Secretary of State, who was on a visit to Havana, would be present at the dinner. The thought instantly occurred to her that Carlos was an American citizen, and she might perhaps interest this official stranger in his behalf. She went to her father's study and was promptly admitted. The conde was sitting, sad and dejected, but looked up tenderly as she handed him the note.

"You do not wish to go out to-night, I suppose?"

"Yes, father, I particularly wish to go. This new American, who is here, may be able to save my brother, and I am determined to approach him."

"Well, there may be something in the thought, and there can at least be no harm in trying. I will go, if you wish it."

"And will you please go early, father? I wish to see the marquesa before the other guests arrive; she may help me."

"As you say, my child. When shall we order the carriage?"

"At half-past seven, for the dinner is at eight."

They dared not trust themselves to speak on the subject that was uppermost in the thought of both, and Catalina returned to her own apartment and wrote a note accepting the invitation, adding that she particularly desired a few moments' conversation with the marquesa before the dinner. She was intimate enough to make the request, and said:

"I shall venture to come at a quarter of eight, and am sure you will not be angry."

At the appointed hour the conde and his daughter alighted in the covered court-way under the palace, among sentinels and orderlies, who bowed and opened a way respectfully, but made no military salute, for the colonel was in ordinary evening dress. They mounted four or five short flights of marble steps, passed the entresol, and ascended to the first story, where the Havanese of importance have their reception-rooms as well as their personal apartments. A waiting-room on the right was little used, for the Cubans need few wrappings, night or day. Catalina wore no mantilla, and her father carried his hat with him into the inner halls.

They first entered a long corridor overlooking on the left a court-yard at the centre of the palace. In this gallery card-tables and light sofas and chairs were disposed, and a few huge tropical plants. Here, after dinner, the gentlemen were accustomed to smoke or play at cards or chess, or even to read, when, as often happened, they were disinclined to join the ladies. On the right a row of arched and lofty door-ways opened into a hall fifty feet long and twenty or thirty wide, uncarpeted, and paved, like all the floors of the palace, with marble. This was the ordinary dancing-room. It was furnished with a few gilded chairs and a profusion of mirrors and marble tables ranged along the walls. Enormous chandeliers of crystal, brilliantly lighted, hung from the ceiling, and at the centre a mass of variegated foliage made the room look fresh and cool.

Beyond this sala was another, greater in width, and a hundred feet long, with more mirrors and lights and flowers, and carpets spread here and there, around

which were arranged the inevitable *estradas*, the figures in which the seats are always grouped in a Cuban drawing-room. No one knows the origin of the custom; it does not exist in Spain, but prevails more or less in all Spanish America. Two parallel rows of chairs are placed facing each other, with a sofa across the top, and into this compartment the women are ushered, those of highest rank taking the top; but the men may only come in to talk for a while or look over the sides or backs of the chairs. It is a very unsocial fashion, and breaks the company into ungenial coteries. It divides the men too much from the women, and makes it difficult for those within to change their place, so that ladies often retain for a whole evening the seats assigned them on entering, and depend on the courage or gallantry of their male acquaintances for any attentions they may receive.

No one had preceded Catalina and her father as they entered this inner sala. The windows in front, almost the only ones in Havana that are glazed, were all thrown open upon a long balcony overlooking the plaza, where a military band was playing selections from masses and other music appropriate to Holy Week. On the right the doors were open into another chamber hung with pictures of past Viceroyes—the cemetery it was irreverently called by the aides-de-camp. On the left was the throne-room, where levees were held, the Captain-General standing on a dais under a life-sized picture of the King. Here they were met by a servant with a message from the marquesa, begging Catalina to come at once to her boudoir, and informing the conde that the General would receive him very shortly.

Catalina went on into an apartment smaller than any that have been described, but with more furniture—carpets, a piano-forte, a little book-case, an easel with an exquisite Murillo on it, and prints and drawings scattered around. Everything indicated taste and refinement. The mistress entered at once.

She was not tall, but yet imposing in appearance; her air was noble; her arms and bust were sumptuous, and her dark eyes and handsome features had a touch of intellectuality about them not often seen in Spanish beauties; a great lady undoubtedly, familiar with courts, used herself to holding high positions, maintaining her rank, but not over-conscious of it. She was highly cultivated, spoke French and Italian perfectly, had a good acquaintance with English, and was an accomplished musician; had sung and acted in court theatres in the Queen-Mother's time.

She was also a politician. Her husband was reported to owe his place to her high-bred tact and courtly acumen. When Isabella one day visited Alfonso without notice, coming over suddenly from Paris, the ministers were taken aback and knew not what to do with the unwelcome guest. Her former Majesty had never been in Spain since her dethronement, and she might be inclined to reassume her ancient place. There were questions of etiquette about her reception. But the Marquesa de Manzanillo, whose husband was in command at the frontier, at once persuaded him to receive the Queen with royal honors and in his fullest uniform. Isabella never forgot this sagacious devotion, offered when others failed. She proceeded to Madrid and attained considerable influence, and although she was finally induced to return to Paris, it was not until she

had rewarded her adherents, and Manzanillo received the captain-generalship of Cuba.

His wife was thought to like the vice-regal rôle, and not to have forgotten her political arts; yet she had many enemies. The Spanish party of course was at her feet; but though she made strenuous efforts to establish an understanding with the important Cubans, she never succeeded in attracting them to her society. Nevertheless, she made the palace most inviting. Her dinners and receptions were constant; there was always music and generally dancing; the company was distinguished, for the high Spaniards all have good manners, even when their morals are bad; the aides-de-camp were attentive, and the marquesa herself strove to entertain, as well as receive, her guests; and but for the political feeling at the bottom of the social disaffection the little court would have been a delightful one. There was an ease about it that existed nowhere else in Cuban society, and yet a quiet dignity that reflected the manner of its mistress.

But the violence of party hate did not hesitate to attack the lady herself, whose husband was at the head of the government. She was accused not only of personal favoritism, but of fomenting political intrigues, and even of selling her ascendancy with her husband; and though this, of course, was the aspersion of partisans, the scandal embittered her life and affected her influence. She was very devout, much given to charities, and at the head of every benevolent enterprise in Havana; but malice followed even in the train of her virtues, and declared that the alms she collected for the poor and the suffering were reserved, in part, for her own purse, to gild, it was said, her recent *corona*. She

knew of these calumnies, but never betrayed to any but her intimate friends that she felt the sting of the accusations of her enemies. She was proud, reserved, when she chose, and so far as she chose; a woman fit not only for the position which she worthily and gracefully filled, but for higher ones, if fortune ever called her to them.

She was dressed always in black, the mourning for a long-lost relative, but it was becoming; it lessened the appearance of *embonpoint*, it contrasted with her magnificent bosom and arms, and formed a background for her jewels, which were fine. Her gown was cut low, and her sleeves were short, but a delicate black lace scarf thrown over her shoulders lessened the appearance of full dress. Her hands were ungloved, and she glided quickly and gracefully to Catalina, to prevent her coming too far to meet her.

The two handsome women kissed each other, and the marquesa at once exclaimed:

"My dearest, I have this moment heard the terrible news. The General has just told me about your brother. How good you are to come. And how I wish I could do something for you! But you know, in a matter like this my hands are tied. I wish, indeed, the General had more power. But perhaps we shall learn something that will enable the courts to be lenient." She evidently feared that Catalina's request for an interview meant an application in behalf of Carlos.

But the girl at once relieved her.

"You can do nothing, marquesa, I know it too well. But I have an idea that may prove important. This American diplomatist, can he not aid me? My brother

is an American citizen, you know ; and if he will ask for the release of Carlos, perhaps the General may find himself able to comply."

Quick as thought the marquesa grasped the possibilities. She was fond of Catalina, and would be glad to serve her. It would be well, too, not to exasperate so important an adherent, at this juncture, as the Conde de Casa-Nueva. The Captain-General might, indeed, yield to the representations of a foreign statesman—a member of a foreign government speaking in behalf of his fellow-citizen—what, under other circumstances, it would be impossible to concede.

"You have the right thought," she exclaimed, "and in this I can help you. Between us two women we ought to be able to effect our purpose, and save your brother ; but we must work, both of us," she added, stopping with a gesture the thanks that Catalina was about to pour forth. "You must impress this American, who is young, and not a great man by any means—not fit for his position ; but, of course, he thinks otherwise. Come this way, and I will tell you about him."

CHAPTER IV.

WASHINGTON SOCIETY.

A FORTNIGHT before the circumstances just narrated, the Assistant Secretary of State was seated in the chair of his chief at Washington. This was no unusual occurrence, for the Secretary himself, Mr. Littleton, was a man verging upon age, and lacking mental vigor, who evaded responsibilities, and preferred to leave the irksome duties of his office to his subordinates whenever possible. He was so fortunate as to have been born in a small and unimportant State, and of a political family; he was early pushed, and he had few rivals, so that, although destitute of qualities entitling him to such preferment, he had arrived successively at the positions of governor, senator, and foreign minister, all of which he filled respectably, but without distinction of any sort. A charming wife, long dead, had aided him in maintaining the social advantages that he enjoyed by birth, and developed whatever opportunities his moderate wit, and still more moderate energy, had been able to secure. He was well enough bred, but uninteresting, and altogether an excellent specimen of the class so rare here, but so often seen abroad, of statesmen by circumstance and position, without either native ability or force of character—the most un-American product possible of the soil—a distinct survival, in fact, of the antirevolutionary period.

When, on the death of the President, the Vice-President had succeeded, the latter, who aspired above all things to social distinction and the reputation of decorous surroundings, invited Mr. Littleton to the first seat in his Cabinet, and after due deliberation, weighing the prestige of place against the drudgery of office and the burden of responsibility, that gentleman accepted the position of Secretary of State, and immediately set about reversing everything that had been spirited or patriotic in the policy of his predecessor. He had, at first, for Assistant Secretary a man who was strong enough, and able enough, and experienced enough in courts and politics and diplomacy to have filled the highest place with acceptance to the country and credit to himself and the government; but such a man had too much energy, originality, and knowledge to suit his superior, who, unwilling to take the trouble himself to rule, was yet loath to seem to be ruled by others, and preferred the yoke of chief clerks and people who were never heard of, and could not be supposed to exercise influence, much less control, to a connection with men conversant with great affairs. The chief clerks, of course, disliked a real master, and found means to suggest to Mr. Littleton that his able subordinate was initiating too many policies and accomplishing too many purposes, and, above all, acquiring too much repute. This was enough for the indolent but jealous principal. The intrigues of the clerks succeeded, and the supposed master of the palace was obliged to resign. "We want no Capets here," said the *fainéant* of the State Department.

In his stead, Littleton called in his only child, a youth unknown to the country, ignorant of affairs, and

destitute of any marked ability, whose previous career had fitted him rather to rule a club or manage a provincial ball-room than to engage in diplomacy or undertake the administration of a department of the government, and who, until fortune was thus thrust upon him, had not suspected himself of any qualities higher than those of his associates in society, or in that vapid life which young Americans—called well-connected—lead when they are neither in the professions nor in trade. But in the exalted spheres where statesmen are created by the fiat of a President, all miracles are credible, and Bainbridge sprang full-fledged, like Pallas, from the brain of his progenitor, and surprised the world. He was unmarried, and having good looks and good manners, had found favor in the eyes of one of the most attractive women in America.

The beauty of Adelaide Harrison was peculiar. She was tall and graceful, lithe, yet ample in form, a blonde, with light hair but dark eyes, and an expression in which intellectual brilliancy was subdued by the indications of passionate possibilities. Her manner, also, was unusual. It provoked rather than invited admiration, and there was an air of apparent indifference about her which, added to her personal charms, at once made a man of spirit desire to conquer it. She was supremely ambitious, though less, perhaps, of position than of power. A woman of genius, she yet cared only enough for culture in literature or art to enable her to summon cultivated men about her and detain them after they had arrived. Her realm was the world, her rôle to rule in a real society, such a one as in America exists nowhere except at Washington.

Contradictions were of the essence of her character. She could hardly be called a manœuvrer, and was by no means a calculating or intriguing person, preferring to accomplish her aims by sheer force of beauty and genius. But though she often took people by storm, she sometimes conquered by strategy, and was learned in all womanly wisdom, full of womanly spirit, and bright in all womanly arts and ways—exactly the person who if thrust by fortune into extraordinary circumstances would know how to control or mould them to her own purposes and desires. She was, above all, a living argument in favor of materialism. You could not conceive of her soul or brain apart from her body. Brain and soul were with her not only enveloped in flesh and blood and manifested through them, but permeated by them in return.

There was nothing common about her externals. Her birth gave her access to the most desirable circles, and she had sufficient fortune to maintain her place, at least away from New York. In Washington her great natural spirits, added to her intelligence, attractions, and accomplishments, had made her the life and soul of that delightful coterie of clever women and distinguished men which is almost without a rival in the capitals of the world for its intimacy, its unsuspected exclusiveness, its simplicity and brilliancy combined—a brilliancy kept carefully for itself, a simplicity so rare in American society.

This woman when nearly thirty had enjoyed and endured her own experiences, of course, but never absolutely succumbed to the influence of any man. She had met the most famous soldiers and statesmen and diplomats of her day, had interested many of them and

been herself interested in several in return; but her great passion had not come. She had all the capabilities of love, but had been too generally occupied with life and with men to fall before the shaft of any individual. But this very impenetrability by which she had been protected made her armor peculiarly accessible if once the joints were loose, and having gone through a decade without losing her heart, she finally found herself absolutely in love with Bainbridge Littleton.

She could not at first believe the report of her own sensations, for she was used to studying herself, and recognized at once a new emotion. How could it be that she, an acknowledged belle and queen, who had seen senators and generals and ministers at her feet without concern or discomposure, was fascinated by a man of hardly second-rate ability, of no reputation, of some personal attractiveness, to be sure, but not even an Apollo to excuse her infatuation. She struggled hard, but it was of no use, and mortified, provoked, she yet confessed to herself that she loved this man—this youth to her, for he was of her own age; and a woman of thirty is ten years older in experience than a man of the same date. This boy had done nothing to give him knowledge, or dignity, or character. She knew, too, that her feeling was not even requited. She saw that Bainbridge was incapable of such a passion as that which consumed her, and she was angry enough with herself for its existence and with him for his comparative indifference, to strangle either. But her own experience with other men and her observation of other women taught her that the situation was not new, and that because it was intolerable was no reason that it should be avoidable.

Bainbridge, however, was not cold ; and she, when she found herself entangled, determined that she would not be despised. She set herself to work with all her arts and all her charms to win him ; and of course succeeded. He was soon as much in love as with his nature it was possible to be. Her own passion increased with the effort and was enhanced by the return.

At this juncture there came to Washington a new personage.

This was the Vice-President, the Albert Edward of America, as he liked to be called ; the occidental Prince of Wales, the heir-presumptive to the American throne ; the walking gentleman of the Washington play ; next in rank and precedence—which no one valued so highly as he—to the President, but less in power and real importance than almost any political man in the country, unless, indeed, under the most unexpected and undesirable of circumstances.

This potential potentate had hitherto lived in the atmosphere of petty politics, and in the more recondite walks of his profession had made himself a certain reputation. He had a decided talent for working the strings that party leaders hold, controlling the men upon whom such leaders rely, and offering to the ignoble the inducements which naturally affect their action ; and was soon reckoned one of the most adroit of those subordinate statesmen whose acquaintance with certain phases of human character is so highly prized by their superiors. He was especially successful in the management of political conventions and in directing political committees of the opposite party in their dispositions to betray their own friends.

He was decidedly more than a stoker of the machine, he was an accomplished engineer.

His politics, however, were purely mechanical. He never aspired to the heights of principle in statesmanship; he never penetrated to the fact that there are men in affairs free from interested motives or susceptible to noble impulses. He understood little about measures, but busied himself with the means.

By one of those odd chances with which Fortune delights to set at naught the calculations of her worshippers, this man had greatness suddenly thrust upon him. He was nominated for the Vice-Presidency as a sort of sop or set-off to console his chief, who had been disappointed in his plans; and as the presidential candidate was young and strong, the nomination was permitted, with a universal grin at its inappropriateness, and here and there a shudder, as men thought of what must happen if the President should die.

When he was elected, however, he at once displayed commendable anxiety to fit himself for the outward duties and graces of the position to which it had pleased God to call him. He was sworn in as Vice-President, was coached by the great statesman under whom he had served, and decided points of order and decorum for grave and reverend senators, who would probably not have sought his acquaintance a year before. He began at the same time to cultivate what is called society.

His position, of course, opened many doors to him, and he soon became acquainted with Adelaide. At first he was only a new study for her, an entirely different type from those who made up her world, but he was important and might prove useful, so she took him up; for in Washington even vice-presidents must take their

degrees. She was in her turn a great novelty to him. He had not dreamed that such people existed in the fashionable world. He had supposed that world composed of vapid nonentities, people of flesh and blood, it is true, of position and fortune, but characterless and frivolous exclusively, unable to say or do anything to interest such flesh and blood as his own; and he found it crowded with men of distinction and ability, and women of culture and character—he discovered that great events were discussed at dinners and important affairs decided at balls. He was initiated into the delights of conversation and the mysteries of coteries. He took amazingly to this new phase of society presented to him in Washington, which, to be sure, is as different as possible from that existing in New York, and might easily be supposed to be distinct in its nature. He took especially, in time, to the most brilliant member of that society. His attentions were, of course, flattering, and the intimacy went on apace. Adelaide, however, was as yet only his intimate friend, and in no way false in feeling or act to the man who had first touched her heart..

But the President was taken ill. The immense possibilities which this circumstance presented for the Vice-President could not but be evident to every mind in the nation, and, of course, to himself and his friend. At first they did not speak to each other of these contingencies, but as the illness was protracted and the country became anxious, it was impossible to avoid the theme. The man, so profoundly interested, was genuinely shocked and grieved. He was awed, indeed, by the shadow of the great destiny hovering over him, and needed the support and sympathy which were not with-

held. He came into the drawing-room of Adelaide's mother one evening when the crisis was near, and paced the floor in an agony of excitement, covering his face with his hands. Adelaide's agitation was less, and her appreciation of the future of her companion unmingled with alarm. She had already, indeed, begun to contemplate the effect which changes so extraordinary in his condition might have upon her own. She did not love him. Her heart had never wavered in its choice, or rather in its submission to the inevitable. For she had not chosen her lover. He had been selected for her by the Fates ; and the Fates were firm in their determination that she should love him still. Her acts, however, if not her feelings, she could control. Her decisions were her own. And all the ambition of her nature was aroused by the revelation of the imperial vista opening before this man who was certainly within her reach, if not already absolutely at her feet.

"Why are you so overcome?" she asked. "You have done nothing to bring about what you fear. You have not sought to advance yourself still higher. You need not dread a great destiny if it is really reserved for you."

"I know you are right, he replied;" but I feel my unfitness for such a post. My present one even is beyond me; but that, nevertheless, I do not disgrace. But to put me up among the rulers of the earth—me——" and he shuddered at the possibility.

Not so his companion. This very possibility gave her nature the courage which it seemed to take from the weaker man. It suggested to her daring thoughts and deeds not noble, nor commendable, yet not without a certain grandeur in their very culpability. She asked herself at this moment whether she could sacrifice the

love that was now a part of her being, in order to share the fate that the shrinking, awe-struck man before her feared. Could she give this man the strength he needed? Would she be willing for a few years of grandeur, of position, of power, to crush her own heart? She knew by the struggle she had made before she succumbed to her passion for Bainbridge how terrific would be the still greater strife that must ensue if she gave him up; and while she seemed to soothe and encourage his rival, she was battling with her own emotions and terrified at her own thoughts.

The Vice-President, however, felt a strength, if not a calm, that emanated from her and reached him like a magnetic influence.

"You," said he, "are strong. You could bear the weight which it oppresses me even to contemplate."

He threw himself into a chair, and Adelaide rose and approached him. "My friend," she said, "let me give you strength."

He looked up at her, and a familiar thought in an unfamiliar form flashed across his mind. "If I had your strength, your will, your knowledge of a certain world—I should not tremble."

She leaned over him. "You know," she said, "I am your friend. If you are placed in any great emergency, you can rely on me. Let me strengthen you. Let me soothe you now," and she laid her hand upon his forehead. The movement was not calculated. It was inspired by the decision which at the same instant made her know her own mind. She looked at him almost tenderly, but with an expression of magnificent moral force. The touch of her hand inflamed and invigorated him, for he was a man susceptible to sudden emotions.

He was, besides, in a crisis of tremendous excitement, when all the possibilities of his nature were alive and aroused. He started up and exclaimed: "Adelaide, will you really strengthen me, and soothe me as only a woman can? Will you bear this burden of greatness with me?"

"Hush," she said; "we must not calculate on such contingencies. But I will surely do all in my power to aid you."

At this instant her mother entered, and they said no more.

Two days afterward Adelaide was startled by the news that the man who had asked her to share his burdens was President. Would he now claim her support? Would he offer her the brilliant destiny which she could so well mould and ornament? Was she to be among the women who sit near thrones, the consort of a potentate? She had no doubt now of her decision. Her love she cast behind her, wrenching it from her as if she tore her heart from her bosom; but her hand was firm and her will unrelaxed, her temper stern. Passion was struck down at the feet of ambition; yet not struck dead: it lay there writhing before its conqueror, but alive with agony. And then came the terrible anxiety lest the crime should not be rewarded; lest, having determined to sacrifice herself, the sacrifice should be unclaimed; lest she should have sinned for naught. The pride that she had trampled upon for the sake of her ambition revolted at the punishment which she felt that she deserved—to be guilty of the treason and yet not invited to betray.

The new ruler was unable to visit her for a week. The grave public duties devolving on him, the tremen-

dous glare of publicity that was turned on every act, made it impossible for him to spare an hour, or if he could have spared one, to devote it to a woman, neither his relation nor announced as yet as his intended wife. This was no time for gallantry, hardly indeed for courtesy. But after seven days he walked in the evening to her house, having first ascertained that she would be at home. As his visit had been announced, she was left to receive him alone. Her excitement was now greater than his own, though she knew better how to hide her feeling. Her anxiety was keen, for her acceptance depended on his proffer. He may, indeed, have been uncertain of the answer he should receive, in case he asked; but men at such moments are almost always confident, if they are vain, and few men able to offer so grand a destiny would have doubted, even if not vain.

But this man thought he had not determined. He loved the woman, and yet, like all men, he loved his liberty. But more than this, he felt something of the weight that now hung upon his words. He was not, after all, an ordinary man asking a woman worthy of him to be his wife; he was the head of the State contemplating an act in which the whole world was interested, an act that without vanity might be called historical; upon which grave public interests might hinge. The smallest mind in the freshness of such an elevation might have paused. Then, too, the very consciousness of exalted position, though the contemplation had awed him in advance, when the dignity had really come, gave him a poise and deliberation not his own.

Something of all this was apparent to Adelaide as she gave her hand to him who was to decide for her, for she had already determined. This was what galled

her, that her own decision was made before she knew what his would be. He was her master now, at least. She nerved herself to be strong; to be, or to appear to be, calm, if not indifferent. She was determined to show no anxiety.

They looked long into each other's eyes, and she sought to indicate an interest in him that should be full of tenderness, and yet not invite him to be sure. It was not the maiden coyness which restrains the expression of passion. Adelaide rather had to feign a warmth she did not feel, and yet repress an anxiety that was very genuine. Perhaps because there was none of the ordinary passion of the occasion, she was better mistress of herself. Ambition sometimes clears the judgment which sense and emotion cloud.

"I am glad to see you at last," she said. "How are you? How do you stand the trial?"

"I am well:" and then there was silence; a silence so prolonged that finally Adelaide felt it augured ill, and broke it by exclaiming: "And you are President! I cannot congratulate you. I cannot realize it yet."

"Nor I," he said; and yet in his soul he realized it as fully as if he had worn his honors for a year. His was a nature that soon became accustomed to the idea of its own consequence.

She detected the insincerity of his humility and felt that the prize must be won soon, and that it was not now so much support that he desired as decoration and dignity. Her pride was wounded at the discovery. She was not required for great purposes, for this man was incapable of them; she could not salve her conscience by ascribing to herself important influence; she was only to ornament the State and add to the

pomp of a shallow semblance of a Cæsar. It was Zenobia in the train of somebody less than Anthony. But she had made up her mind, and did not flinch at this new humiliation; she would wear the fetters, for they were imperial. "I will accomplish my purpose," she thought to herself; "but the tactics must be entirely changed. To win him, I must play a different game. There are no profound emotions to be touched, those are already exhausted; no grand ambitions to awake, they have never slumbered, for they never existed. She glided at once into the new rôle, but strove to make the transition delicate and imperceptible. "Flattery," she thought, "will succeed."

"You have made a good beginning," she said. "You have already won the commendation of the country. Not a mistake in conduct or in word. I told you you would do well."

She had, indeed, struck the right chord. He was pleased, and she went on fluently now, for she was sure that she was right. He listened eagerly while she told him again of the applause of the world, and pretended that she discovered motives of high-bred delicacy and innate dignity, and predicted the acts which she was sure he intended, and contrived to show him how they should be performed. He accepted the praise, and listened to what was really advice in the guise of flattery, and thought, as she intended he should, how wonderfully this woman knows what should be done; how she would teach me, and inspire me to act with perfect propriety in all things, great and small. He determined that he would ask her to assume the task. But her lesson of delicacy was so well instilled that he be-thought him he should not rush in this first interview

into propositions of such a nature ; he fancied she would think him lacking in those fine perceptions which she had contrived to make him believe that she ascribed to him, and the very success of her art defeated or delayed the immediate result that she had planned. He left her after an hour which had been full of confidences, full of interest, full of emotion ; yet he had not spoken of that which was uppermost in the thought of each during every moment of the hour. But Adelaide knew that her triumph was only deferred.

She was in no haste after this to precipitate an avowal. He came to her often, and their conversations were prolonged and important, but the absolute word remained unspoken for weeks. Her friends were restrained from inquiry by the impropriety of remark under the circumstances, and Bainbridge, who was becoming anxious, felt that it would be indelicate in him to suggest an apprehension. The two men sometimes met in Adelaide's drawing-room, but the new President contrived to wear so much of the imperial manner that the younger man, who had been bred in the decorums of an official family, betrayed no jealousy. Adelaide herself felt more keenly than her earlier lover, because her passion had been the stronger, and in the tornado of emotion in which she was involved, one tremendous sensation was always paramount.

Finally, after a month of delay, the President said to her one evening, when they were discussing the new policies of the new administration and the new members of the government,—

“And now that public matters are in some sort settled for a while——”

She trembled, for his tone and glance betrayed that

the long-expected utterance was at hand. Her emotion made her interesting, though it was not the emotion that he fancied. He forgot all the elaborate phrases that he had planned, and before he left Adelaide was the affianced wife of the President.

The marriage was not to be immediate. It was not thought decorous to introduce the festivities of such an occasion into the Executive Mansion too soon after the recent mourning; but the engagement was at once announced. Adelaide desired to be known as the future wife of the President.

But although triumphant in her ambition, she had not mastered the rival emotion. Her passion for Bainbridge was no less intense because she had determined to trample on it. She dreaded to meet her earlier lover, not so much because she feared his accusations or his indignation, as because she knew that her own feelings would be harrowed by the interview. Bainbridge, she was well aware, would soon console himself, if not by another love, by his pleasures or affairs. His sentiments were not profound enough to rack him long at the disappointment. He would be mortified; but to be overshadowed by the chief of the State is no great humiliation after all. He had been used to yielding precedence to high dignitaries all his life. Those who live at court and are not royal must expect to make plenty of obeisances of every sort.

But the woman herself had no such weakness to count on. She, who felt herself infinitely superior to both these men, who deserted one whom she profoundly loved for another because of his position in the world—she knew the wrong she was committing, the baseness of which she was guilty. She knew that she wronged

herself more than she did the man who was not worthy of her; and yet the whole passion of her nature was bestowed upon the object which she refused. Her gain, she was conscious, did not compensate for the loss of one who cared so little for her; and yet she never wavered.

Bainbridge met her at a ball on the night after she became engaged to the President. The absolute announcement was not yet public, and Adelaide felt it due to herself, as well as to Bainbridge, that he should learn his dismissal from her lips. He had, as we have seen, observed the intimacy that all the world had noticed, and he knew the character and ambition of his mistress well enough to be certain that the temptation would be strong; yet he knew also something of the intensity of her overmastering passion for himself, and he fancied that she would be firm. Nevertheless he was not without a certain anxiety, and as he approached the woman he loved, he perceived that she was hardly able to control herself. This alarmed him. She put her arm into his, however, and asked him to take her into the air. There was a half-enclosed veranda behind the ball-room, and as the hour was still early, not many had entered it. At one end was an alcove, almost secluded, and thither Adelaide led her lover—"perhaps," she thought to herself, "for the last time; perhaps he will never speak to me again. Will any rank, or power, or adulation of the crowd compensate for what I am abandoning?"

She was dressed in white, with a garniture of black and white lace mingled, and strings of pearls for her only ornament. The lace was abundant, and hung in graceful fulness, enveloping her stately form, and she

held a daintily painted fan that Bainbridge himself had given her. The entire effect was sumptuous and elegant rather than brilliant: like the strength of her character shaded and softened by its fascinations.

Full dress was always becoming to her, for her neck and arms were noble in proportion, and exquisite in tint and texture; her emotion heightened her color, and gave her dark eyes more than their usual brightness, tempered with a peculiar softness when she looked at Bainbridge. Her manner was impassioned, yet repressed, and though she did not tremble, there was a certain tenseness in her personality that almost transfigured her. She was like one of the great women of the stage at the instant when they exert all their power, and become transformed into the character they assume. In her case, however, it was the reality that penetrated outward, and the passion of a tremendous nature that shone through the disguises of the woman of the world.

"You have not seen me since Sunday," she said. "Why have you stayed away?"

The young man looked into her eyes, and felt all their fire kindling his own emotions; he had never loved her so much, and yet at the moment he felt that there was a strange look about her; he feared, he knew not what, and stammered: "I was afraid of meeting the President." The words came out doggedly, as if they were the truth that he did not wish to recognize.

Adelaide did not expect the thrust, and instantly determined to make him feel. She would at least have the satisfaction of knowing that the loss of her gave him a pang. She would indulge herself and avenge herself at once. All the volcano of passion this man had

aroused in her should be emptied upon him. He had lighted the fire, and should be consumed as well as she.

"And did you fear the President?" she said, in a tone full of tenderness and meaning. "Did you fear me? Could you?"

The impetuous blood that leaped to her cheek as she made the inquiry almost seemed to throb in the pulses of the man as he responded, boiling now with an agitation equal to her own.

"There has been a time, Adelaide, when I could have answered 'No;' but of late I have seen too much, and felt too much, not to fear. But I fear not the President. I fear you; your ambition, your worldliness, even your superiority. You are so great that you think you deserve the greatest; and I do fear you. You are willing to sacrifice me."

This ordinary man had probed the deeper nature beside him. This lover already discarded, though he knew it not, was able to penetrate to the motives of the woman who would have given the world not to desert him, who was dying at this moment to throw herself into his arms. The lesser thus are often able to detect the springs of action in those greater than themselves. He had been able to stir this magnificent being to emotions far beyond his own; and now his insignificant genius was seeing far down into the depths of her who loved him while she despised him. Adelaide felt herself laid bare before him; that she could have no concealments in her abasement as she had been able to hold up none in her attachment. All thoughts of triumph were gone; it was she who was prostrate; he who had conquered again. And she must love him through it all.

But she made one more struggle for victory.

"And you think I can sacrifice you! You doubt me! You deserve that I should deserve your doubts."

"Ah; you cannot put me away like that. I see your falsehood in your eyes. I hear it in your tone. I feel it in your touch," for he had laid his ungloved hand upon her arm. "And yet you love me. I know this too; Adelaide Harrison, I know you thoroughly. You love me as well as ever. But you think yourself my superior, deserving of a grander destiny than I can give you. And then comes along this extraordinary chance, and you cannot resist the tempter. No woman ever does, when he comes in such a shape. The world is your Satan; he offers you the apple, and what might be your paradise you sacrifice. Pride, pride, pride."

The intensity of the situation and the fulness of his feeling at the moment opened the eyes of the man to the exact truth, and gave him a momentary dash of genius; for passion often is akin to genius. It infused his words and gave them a meaning and a force they never had before, and would never have again. For a moment Bainbridge spoke and behaved like a great man. He was great in his passion and in his truth.

And the woman being wrong, was weak. She loved him, and could not defy him. All she said was: "Pity me."

He looked at her only a moment at this confession, and seizing the fan he had given her, he broke it into a hundred fragments, and left her alone. Adelaide was discarded.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXECUTIVE MANSION.

As soon as she was married Adelaide set herself to befriending Bainbridge. He was not rich, and she proposed to her husband one or two places to offer him, and they were offered; for the President was so complacent in his vanity and so confident in his powers that he had no jealousy. He knew that Bainbridge had been an aspirant for Adelaide's hand, but he thought it natural that when the great man came along the opportunity of the smaller should diminish and disappear. He pitied Bainbridge, and was willing to do a little for him from whom he had taken so much. Nothing very suitable, however, was found until the change in the State Department occurred. Then it was Adelaide who first suggested the place for Bainbridge.

By this time three or four months had elapsed since her marriage, and the wounds of the young man were healing; he could meet his former mistress calmly. He went to the President's levees, and was even invited to the dinners, though he was not important enough to take in the President's wife. Adelaide, however, had made advances to him, and they were not repelled. Her feeling had undergone no change; but she knew that he was now indifferent. She had no thought of recalling him, no intention to betray her husband. She valued

too highly the opinion of the world and her own position. She meant not to sacrifice that for which she had sacrificed so much. But she meant to enjoy his society at times, to indulge herself with the sight of him, and to do whatever might lie in her power to benefit him. To this she thought her misery and her sacrifice entitled her.

So upon one occasion, when it was possible for them to talk without being overheard, she asked him to be seated on the sofa beside her, and immediately said : "Would you like to be Assistant Secretary of State? Your father intends to make a change, and has no especial preference."

This was more than Bainbridge himself had heard. He lived in the house with his father, and they were on good enough terms ; but they never talked politics or business. Mr. Littleton had taken it for granted that his son had no interest in great affairs, and this was true. He had supposed his son to be possessed of no extraordinary abilities, and this also was true. So he had not consulted him about the choice of a new assistant.

Bainbridge looked up inquiringly at Adelaide, and for the first time a scintilla of ambition was kindled in him. His passion having been disappointed, he had yet found nothing to fill its place ; and though after the first pang the suffering had not been acute, there was still the vacancy unoccupied.

"If my father wishes it, and the President consents, I see no objection."

"I wish it, Bainbridge. Will you take it for me, and from me? I should like to do something for you."

"It is rather late for you to think of that," he replied.

"No, it is not late. Let me think that I am of some use to you."

"As you choose," he said coldly, and she could not trust herself to add more; for the President stood on the opposite side of the room, looking at them, though he was conversing with another woman. She rose, and asked Bainbridge to take her to her husband, and, as they walked across she said: "I will see that you have the appointment."

She had little trouble in accomplishing her object. The President and Mr. Littleton both were willing, and in this way Bainbridge became Assistant Secretary of State, and concerned in the destinies of Cuba.

Adelaide, however, was sadly disappointed in the character of the sway to which she succeeded. She had influence enough with her husband; she could procure appointments or dispense invitations as she chose. No rival in political or social matters could dispute her power; but she quickly found that the President's ideas of statesmanship were limited to plans to secure the retention of his post, and his ambition to fill his office worthily meant a desire to establish forms and etiquettes at the Executive Mansion, imitating, as far as he could learn them, the regulations of European courts. She had aspired to share the projects and mould the purposes of a man with great national and international policies; but her husband's aim in public life was to escape criticism and propitiate his enemies. So long as he did not attract attention or discussion by any controverted measure, nor excite the antagonisms of earnest believers of an opposite creed, he thought he was doing well. And perhaps he was. He knew his own limitations, and preferred the shallow waters of society and of personal politics to the mighty seas where the ship of state encounters foreign rivalries or

the storms of contests that may become historical. So he set himself, from the day when he entered on his place, to the task of manipulating politicians, and adroitly distributing, or still more adroitly withholding, patronage.

But even in this restricted sphere his vision was not broad enough to take in the real situation. He came to his post after a furious strife in his own party, in which he had been swept along as a partisan, simply following his leaders whithersoever they led; but being elevated into the position of a leader himself, he made a capital blunder. He determined to propitiate his enemies at the expense of his friends. His friends, he thought, were secure, and his enemies he meant to win; then he would have all the world. So he offered place to his avowed antagonists, and left those who had been bitterest in their animosity to himself—who had hurled personal accusations at him of the harshest character—in posts where they could injure him most. He put men into his Cabinet because they had been his opponents, while he parted with the people who had aided and advanced him through all his political life, and had given him the very opportunities that opened the way to his present position; and all this without any cause of quarrel with his former patrons, not because they sought to rule him or pestered him with applications or advice, but simply because he was afraid that to befriend his friends would provoke further opposition from his enemies. He was not naturally mean nor ungrateful; he would have been glad to do more for his earlier associates and superiors, but he did not dare. In the same way all that he offered his ancient opponents was gratuitous. It was without overture or solicitation on their part, who were bold, outspoken,

offensive all the time. They made no bids for his favor, and if they accepted his gifts, they neither promised nor gave their support in return.

Of course this policy was a failure. This conduct persisted in for years lost him all his old friends worth having, and gained him hardly one of importance among his adversaries. When the time came that he wanted strength, he had none except what he derived from his office. The former enemies were as implacable as ever, and those whom he had thought to propitiate fought him in the very positions he had given them or allowed them to retain; while those who had been his allies, excluded from great place, refused smaller posts, or abandoned office under him in order to attack him with freedom. His insignificant course in really great affairs procured him, it is true, the friendship of a few whose only desire was for quiet at any price, that they might increase their gains; but this was the only support he won that was not the result of patronage. Those who feared for their old places and those who hoped for new ones were his partisans; and the patronage of the presidential office is so enormous that he collected a considerable party, held together without either admiration or affection on either personal or public grounds, but by sheer dint of interest.

But—lesson to time-servers, no matter how highly placed—this very desertion of his political friends defeated him in the end. The office-holders, with the help of those whom he had offended, could have secured for him what he was aiming at. He came near enough to success to show that the aid of his old allies would have been sufficient; but he had gained hardly one important accession from his enemies, and had driven those who

had been his associates, and might now have been his followers, to the support of the man who had once been their bitterest enemy, and was still his own. Had he been staunch to his friends, he might have overthrown his enemies; but his enemies remained firm and unbroken, and their ranks were augmented by the friends whom his course had converted into foes.

He had, we have seen, neglected all really great affairs, and bent his whole political energies to the manœuvring for which he felt himself equipped. Important policies at home or abroad, measures to advance American interests, to protect American citizens, to arouse American sentiment—these were on a level to which he did not aspire. Not one was accomplished during his administration. But even from his own point of view, and in his chosen field, his political huckstering failed. The petty arts with which he was familiar were fitted perhaps to win in the custom-houses and State capitals, where offices and men are said to be bought and sold; but in the larger arena of the nation, where statesmen contend for victory, political fidelity and honor count.

But there was still a stage on which he could play his part, and where he felt himself certainly able to shine. This was the great social world, in which he was determined to show America, and Europe too, what a President should be in externals. His predecessors, who had won their place by achievements in statesmanship or war, had omitted to hedge themselves with the ceremonies which sovereigns in the Old World have always considered so essential. Former Presidents thought their dignity conserved by simplicity of life and surroundings; they relied on their character, and the position to which they had been elevated by the suf-

frages of their countrymen, to secure them respect and sufficient deference. Men who had been ministers at foreign courts, or passed their lives in the most refined and distinguished circles in America, had strangely failed in these particulars of etiquette and ceremony. It was reserved for the new incumbent of the chair of Washington to inaugurate a different system. Here, indeed, was his opportunity.

Accordingly he set up for himself royalty as a pattern, not thinking of the incongruity between model and copy. He established rules and regulations which he had heard existed in European courts, appropriate perhaps under a monarchy, but absurd above all things in a republic. Based, as these rules are, on the supposition of an innate difference between man and man, their introduction in America is an impertinence. He forgot that the whole tendency of the time, in Europe as well as here, is to democracy; that it is no longer station, nor fortune, nor birth, that makes an inequality universally recognized, but character, education, and achievement. A man who had been received at every court in Europe as an equal, said of these new pretensions: "The President is an imitator of royalty; but *we ought to be more genteel than royalty.*"

But this newcomer into importance set himself to teach those who had been in high positions all their lives, and he pleased immensely all the would-be genteel. Those who could see no further than the surface perceived that his clothes were well cut and his dinners well served, the appointments and decorations of the Executive Mansion superior to what they had ever been before; and there went up a cry among the second-rate: "At last we have a gentleman for President." The great

people, the great men in politics, and the great women in society saw through him ; but second-rate politicians and second-rate gentlefolk went into ecstasies, the first over his manœuvres and the last over his manners, and both were bad.

For the imitation of royalty was not only inappropriate and offensive, it was incorrect. It was a caricature, not a copy. His regard for the dignities of his place was confined to an anxiety about etiquette and a taste for æsthetic decoration ; he was particular about the precedence at his dinner-table, and ever mindful that the dignity of America was concentrated in his person ; but the essential dignities and courtesies of a great gentleman he did not reach. He never even learned that punctuality is the politeness of kings, and purposely and customarily kept his guests waiting an hour, so that he might enter a room in what he thought proper form ; and was even known to remark as he made his appearance : " It is etiquette to wait for the President." He never by any chance wore the wrong coat, but he often did the wrong thing. He insisted on entering a carriage before a lady, and on being served first at his own table, because he was President ; but the same reason did not prevent his breaking his pledged word or turning his back on his benefactors : while no one apparently had ever told him that the sovereigns of Europe punctiliously defer to ladies, that at every European court the women precede the men even of royal degree ; and the story of the nobleman who entered a carriage before Louis XIV., at the king's command, he had not read at school. He fancied he was playing the rôle of royalty, but he had not learned his part.

He had in his mind, apparently, the members of the reigning family of England, more especially George IV. and the present Prince of Wales; but the first of these, though selfish and despicable in character, was never so consumed by a regard for the dignity to which he was born as to remind his own guests that he thought them his inferiors, and the future sovereign of England—if he has no more ability than his American imitator, if he regards etiquette and forms as a man may who is born in them and lives for them, who is himself a ceremony—yet considers courtesy as important as dignity, and has all the good feeling that good-breeding, if it does not possess, at least assumes.

The President we speak of lived in the forms, and never penetrated to the reality of that behavior which men call royal. He made lookers-on exclaim: "Better the ignorance of form and even the coarseness of manner which are sometimes seen in America—aye, and in Europe too, in high place—than these aspirations after aristocracy which copy its most glaring faults but fail to catch its most essential charm."

CHAPTER VI.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

THE appointment of Bainbridge proved a very agreeable arrangement for all the parties at the head of the government. It relieved Mr. Littleton in some degree from the distasteful cares of office, as well as from all fear of an overshadowing subordinate; it salved the wounds of the deserted lover; it enabled Adelaide to think that something had been done for the man she regarded, and brought him more frequently into official society, where of course he was in her company; and it gave the young man himself more interesting occupation than the accounting of club bills or the arrangement of bachelors' balls. That it was effected by a sacrifice of dignity on the part of Bainbridge, and looked like a solace for the loss of his mistress, did not apparently occur to the budding statesman or his father, while, if the President thought about the matter at all, he considered that he had made a very proper use of official patronage. The world of Washington, social and political, smiled and shrugged its shoulders, and sometimes said satirical things, but went to the official parties and accepted official favors all the same.

Bainbridge, however, was determined to master the mysteries of statecraft, and very soon believed he had succeeded. He had just enough ability to give him

countenance in the delusion, so he devoted himself assiduously to the study of diplomacy, and thought he ruled the department of which his father was the nominal chief. The way of it was this. The Secretary signed everything that the Assistant Secretary wrote for him, and the clerks prepared everything for the Assistant. It was the era of clerk rule. With indifference and inefficiency at the head, ability removed, and incompetence and inexperience substituted, these gentry had it all their own way. There was a little arrangement, extending to other departments of the government, by which they favored each other's friends and frowned on each other's foes, and furnished each other with secret information and gave out forged or garbled communications to the newspapers. By and by they aspired to dabble in foreign policies, and even to make ministers and control them; to overrule and overturn, not only their superiors, as we have seen, but refractory diplomatists or consuls who resisted their sway; and at last to concoct treaties, and sometimes make a little money in obscure ways. All they had to do was to hoodwink their superiors, and this was an easy task, for the President left everything in the way of diplomacy in the hands of the State Department, and the Secretary went off to his country-house for months at a time, and the fledgling who had been promoted issued instructions as Acting Secretary to the highest diplomatic servants of the government, and the clerks wrote out these instructions for him in a clear and legible hand, so that he had no difficulty in understanding them. After a while he ventured to dictate some himself, but then he got into trouble.

About this time the reports from Cuba became in-

teresting and important. The political condition of the island and its relations with this country had been fully set forth by a succession of consuls-general there, who held a quasi-diplomatic position, reporting, not to the United States Minister at Madrid, but directly to the State Department, and who were necessarily taken into relations with their government very different from those of its purely commercial agents. The questions which arose at Havana were often delicate as well as important in their international character; and peace or war, the annexation or independence of the island, were not unfrequently discussed in the consular correspondence. The latest of these representatives had seen the condition of things with no clearer eyes than his predecessors, but being of a more restless disposition, had set himself to find a possible remedy. He was a man of some experience, but still young enough not to have lost his vigor, and was greatly impressed with the possibilities of the island—its unsurpassed natural resources, the capabilities of the soil, the prodigious advantages to be reaped by the United States from unrestricted and legitimate access to its treasures and its trade. He was also shocked at the tyranny of the Spanish rule and the sufferings of the inhabitants; but more than all, he was indignant at the unchecked and unpunished outrages and affronts put upon Americans by the officials of Spain. These he had reported minutely, and had sought to arouse his superiors to insist upon reparation for the past and an absolute cessation in the future; but the State Department was too faint-hearted to resent the insults or redress the injuries endured by its fellow-citizens. It offered some feeble suggestions looking to a different state of affairs,

but when the Spaniards made it apparent that they intended to persist in their offensiveness, the American Government invariably and ignominiously acquiesced. It was too great an exertion for Mr. Littleton to undertake to remedy the wrongs of his countrymen; it might have disturbed, not only his own equanimity, but his social relations with the Spanish Minister, or even have prevented his Excellency from attending the levees of the President.

The Consul-General at Havana, however, Ernest by name and earnest by nature, persisted in pressing his views. He had obtained a leave of absence with the purpose of personally urging the government to put an end to the persecutions of Americans, and of laying before it proof that a bold but discreet policy might be inaugurated, which should protect and foster American interests, as well as revolutionize the commercial and financial condition of the island, and possibly ameliorate its political relations with Spain.

His ideas had been commended by some of the most important men in the country, among them not a few warm friends of the administration and the President. But the Secretary of State was absent from his post whenever Ernest was at the capital, and it was only with the callow statesman who represented him that the consul had been able to confer. Bainbridge, however, was not without a certain sharpness, which had been already stimulated by the despatches of the consul, and he believed that he had detected his opportunity. The suggestions of Ernest might indeed be used, but in a different way from that which their author intended. The fertile genius of the new diplomatist could easily develop greater designs than these. He

would work the propositions over himself, engraft some peculiar notions on them which he had acquired from other sources, and inaugurate a measure of his own; shine out, indeed, as the initiator of a Cuban policy. He had, in fact, been approached by business people with suggestions that he had no desire to communicate to Ernest. His confidants were men of a different sort.

So he sent for Mr. Go-Bright, the chief clerk of the bureaux, to ask him how to make a treaty with Spain. Go-Bright was a person of prodigious importance in an establishment like the State Department in the days of which we write. He knew the official routine; he wrote many of the despatches, and saw them all. He was acquainted with the history of each legation and consulate. He must be consulted on all points of petty detail; and as most of the business at the legations and consulates consists of petty details, he had come by degrees to managing the entire system. In the ignorance of his superiors, his advice was taken as a matter of course; his dicta were tantamount to decisions; and this wholly irresponsible person, unknown to the country or the law, rivalled in power many of the highest functionaries in the government. The consuls discovered that his suggestion settled points of pay and allowance, and the discreet ones paid their court assiduously. They sent him their pictures, and solicited his own in return; they wrote him private letters of request and compliment, and appealed to him as if he were, in reality, chief instead of chief clerk. He had, of course, a lively sense of his own importance, but ruled his kingdom mildly on the whole. His despotism was a paternal one, but he exacted proper recognition and respect from his subjects.

He was abject before his own master, and demanded his dues in his turn.

He had contrived a pleasant surprise for his superior, and went willingly to the audience for which he was summoned.

"Have you any further news from Cuba, Go-Bright?" yawned the Acting Secretary, as he sat in the seat that had been occupied by Webster and Calhoun, affecting not to be greatly interested in the matter on which his whole little heart was set.

"Yes, sir," replied the humble subordinate, who scrupulously maintained the air of dependence in the presence of his chief, and never allowed Bainbridge to suspect that he was kept under lock and chain.

"Yes, sir, I hear that now is really a very good time for you to visit the island. That pestilent Consul-General cannot return for two or three weeks, for the Secretary has only now promised him an interview, and we can easily contrive to detain him here as long as you desire. You can accomplish all you wish in his absence, and be back before he is any the wiser. The people whom he has complained of are ready to receive you, and will make any terms you choose. I heard from them only yesterday."

"If this is so, I will start in a day or two. What about the Spaniards, with whom I am to communicate?"

"I have written to Fisher, the clerk who is in charge, to prepare the way. He is to notify the particular officials whom you can approach, as well as the others in Havana who are interested in our scheme. He has lived in Cuba all his life, speaks the language better than he does English, knows all the government people

and their methods, and understands exactly how to transact such business as ours. When I visited Havana last spring I suspected I had found the man for our purpose, for he had corresponded with me and with some friends of mine in the Treasury. If anything is to be done down there he can show you the way. He hates Ernest, too. You can take him into your confidence, and rely on his secrecy and serviceableness."

"A most excellent man for us, Go-Bright, if he is all that you describe. How lucky that tiresome Consul-General will be out of the way. He might block our game."

"Very likely," replied the confederate. "He has suspicions already of Fisher, and confided them to me when I was in Havana; and I was so highly shocked that he told me all he knew about him. But we must be quick in what we do. He might have the assurance to suspect higher persons than Fisher, if he were on the ground."

"It may be well to get some introductions from him, however," said the Secretary. "I suppose he knows all the official people; and I should like to meet some of the dark-eyed creoles."

"Shall I tell him of your going, when he next comes in? He would be obliged to offer you letters, and they would certainly be useful."

"Yes, do so, Go-Bright, and I will put him down at the club, and then we shall be even. Tell me some more about the details of the treaty."

A few days after this conversation Bainbridge sailed for Havana, and then only was Ernest admitted to an interview with the Secretary of State. It was the

first opportunity he had obtained to set forth his views in person to the chief of the department under which he served. Mr. Littleton was naturally cold and reserved, but his manner on this occasion was peculiarly constrained and ungracious. It was evident that he had no sympathy with the opinions whose gist he declared he knew in advance, and that he submitted to their expression only in order to reject them more definitely. Ernest, however, argued as urgently as he knew how. He set forth at first the condition of the island—its natural advantages of soil and climate; its abounding wealth, mineral, agricultural, and even animal, waiting only to be developed; the commercial advantages offering themselves to any country, but especially to the United States, the neighbor, and yet not the rival, of Cuba. He described the political status and feeling of the inhabitants—the tyranny of Spain, the disaffection of the residents, Spaniards and creoles alike, the imminence of rebellion and anarchy. Finally, he set forth, in detail, the outrageous inflictions on Americans, and the necessity of interference by the American Government.

Here the Secretary interrupted him, exclaiming: “But if we interfere, as you suggest, we should have war with Spain; and how could we contend with Spain or any country, now that we have no navy?”

Ernest replied that a manly, outspoken policy and firm demeanor would prevent, not provoke, a war; that Spain would inevitably yield to the just demands of America—her weakness at home and the dissatisfaction in Cuba would make it impossible for her to resist this country.

But the Secretary still repeated: “We have no navy. We have no navy.”

Thereupon Ernest sought to show that it was not the actual and present power of the United States that Spain or any other foreign state regarded, but its potentiality: the possible, or rather certain, navy we should buy, or build, or in some way procure, within a year from a declaration of war.

"Suppose," he said, "that Spain should contemplate hostilities. She very well knows that though she might annoy us in the first three months, in the next she would suffer immensely more than we; that her commerce would be destroyed, her navy eventually annihilated; Cuba and Porto Rico would both be torn from her forever, and she amerced tenfold for every injury inflicted on the United States; worse off, absolutely, because of early success, whenever the spirit of our people should be aroused.

"No, indeed, Mr. Secretary," exclaimed the consul, warming with his theme, "Spain has far too much to do at home to attack us. Her treasury needs filling, not further depletion; her troops are required to uphold the throne of Alfonso, and her ships to protect her colonies; by a war with us she would instantly lose whatever benefit she now derives from the Antilles, and be obliged to submit to defeat and degradation besides. The Spanish politicians are wise in their generation; they know that not only the dynasty, but the administration, that brought on a war with the United States would be overturned, and the ministry which provokes that war will never be in power."

The Secretary, nevertheless, reiterated that he was determined to have no trouble with Spain. He declared that one of the principal objects of the administration was to avoid such a difficulty. He pointed to the pro-

longed efforts of former cabinets to escape this calamity, even when outrages like the seizure of the *Virginus* had been perpetrated and endured.

Ernest then asked if nothing was to be done to redress the wrongs of Americans in Cuba, nothing to take off the iniquitous taxes on our trade, the unrighteous impositions on our citizens, to release the Americans confined unjustly in Cuban prisons, to avenge the insults to our flag, stricken down by Spanish officials only a few months before.

The Secretary perceived that it would not do to seem entirely to neglect American interests, and mumbled something about inserting a passage in the President's message on the subject; and as he spoke, he began to think that it might be wise not to create too great dissatisfaction in his subordinate, and somewhat modified his disapprobation, though still not indicating any definite acceptance of Ernest's views. With some adroitness he spoke of the possibility of considering those views, declared they were not so impracticable after all as he had thought, that the government was not indifferent to the theme, and Ernest might rest assured that all would be done that was possible. But he impressed again and again on his subordinate the importance of caution and reserve. Ernest's usefulness would be impaired if his opinions should become known. He must preserve absolute reticence, be careful never to discuss the measures he had proposed, and above all not make them known to the newspapers. This the Secretary particularly enjoined. The Spanish Government might demand his recall if he stood up too strongly for his countrymen, and the State Department would be unable to support him in such a contingency. Then,

with another reference to the dreaded Spanish navy, the statesman dismissed his subordinate.

Ernest went away from the interview greatly puzzled and very little encouraged, and did not see the chief of the department again.

CHAPTER VII.

A CUBAN DINNER-PARTY.

IN due time Bainbridge arrived at Havana, and paid his visit promptly to the Captain-General. In the absence of Ernest he was presented by Fisher, who was highly elated at the circumstance, and still more so when they were both immediately invited to dinner. The stay of the Secretary was to be short, for it was important to effect his object and leave the island before Ernest could return; so, although he had arrived on Saturday, he was to dine at the palace on Sunday. Then and there he hoped to begin negotiations, not indeed with the Captain-General; but Fisher had told him that the marquesa was considered accessible, and as both believed in the existence of wickedness in high place, they neither doubted that the mistress of the palace would take an interest in their plans. Bainbridge, it was true, was new at affairs, and exactly how to approach a great lady with propositions purporting to come from a foreign government, he had not learned. Still, he had been several months in place, and felt himself full of experience. He had, besides, no doubt that his natural talent for diplomacy would come to his aid at the critical moment. This was the way with other men of genius; why should it not be with him? Confidence and self-appreciation are characteristic of capacity.

So he dressed with unusual care to impress a woman,

as he hoped, and was a little mortified that Fisher, who was an underbred, pushing fellow, should have been invited to the dinner. It was entirely out of compliment to Bainbridge, however, for Fisher had been twenty years in the consulate, and never asked to the table of a Captain-General before. This information, it is true, he did not impart to his superior, but allowed the Secretary to suppose that he was on intimate terms at the palace.

"'Tis a pity the General and the marquesa speak English," said the clerk to himself, "for otherwise I should have it all my own way. However, there is one consolation. The Treasury officials know nothing but Spanish, and when we see them I shall be more than a match for this pert Secretary."

These were the thoughts of the worthy couple as they passed through the corridor and were ushered into the grand sala, where already eight or ten guests were assembled.

They were greeted by the Captain-General, but the marquesa had not yet appeared. She made it a point to enter the room after the company had arrived, but the host himself welcomed his guests near the door.

Bainbridge was tall and graceful, and had the manner of a man used to good company. Fisher was short and puffy in person, bursting with delight at his first dinner at the palace and wishing dearly that he could telegraph the news to the American press in the morning. He knew the stately apartments well, for the ordinary receptions were not by invitation, and he made it a rule to positively haunt the houses where this was the custom. Foreign officials, of whatever rank, could hardly be refused, and though very little attention was

paid him by important personages, to many of whom, after all these years, he was still unknown, it yet gratified his vanity to be often seen in these really noble halls. But to dine there! This was indeed the crowning achievement of his social existence.

The party was soon made up. Besides the conde and Catalina, Bainbridge and Fisher, it consisted of the Segundo Cabo, or second in command, with an extremely pretty and attractive wife; the chief of staff; Delgado, the political secretary; two or three aides-de-camp, and several other officials, military and civil—eighteen in all. The marquesa's entrance was preceded by that of a little toy terrier, who always announced his mistress, and was nicknamed by her intimates "John the Baptist," the forerunner. She came in easily and without formality, while all were standing, greeting each guest, and when Bainbridge came up she said to him in English, with a very slight accent and an extremely musical voice, "I am very happy to see you;" then immediately presented him to the "Doña Catalina de Casa-Nueva, whose mother was an American, and whose brother," she added distinctly and with some emphasis, "is a countryman of yours."

"I am happy to meet one of my race who does us so much honor," he rather gallantly replied, and the marquesa left them, looking back archly, as she said:

"Do not claim too much, Mr. Secretary; we are not willing to allow her to become entirely American."

Catalina did not blush; she was used to admiration, and even to its expression, and her heart and mind were full of more important matters; yet she was woman enough to know that to gain her end she must

first interest this man—not a very difficult task. Her beauty, of a different type from that to which Bainbridge was accustomed, and a certain foreign air, mingled with something more familiar, which her American mother had transmitted, gave Catalina an attractiveness to any Northerner, while her great nature spoke out so plainly in every movement and glance and utterance, that the most indifferent felt its influence even when she was unconscious of any effort to exert it. The young man was interested before she had spoken.

"You are just arrived, the marquesa tells me," she said, in a low, rich voice—soft, but clear and penetrating, pronouncing the words with that distinctness of utterance which foreigners give to the consonants and unaccented syllables of our language as well as of their own.

"Yes; only yesterday."

"You find much that is strange to an American eye, I am sure, in Cuba."

"All is very foreign; far more so than anything I have seen in Europe. Spain is not so different from America as Cuba."

"What you see here is Old Spain. It is not that we are more foreign, but more mediæval; here we are still in the Middle Ages. Nearly everything in Cuba is as it was three hundred years ago."

"How strange!" exclaimed the Secretary. "And so near the United States."

"Not only strange, but wrong. We should be more like the Great Republic, being so near. But it is not altogether our own fault. If our great neighbor obeyed the scriptural command and loved us as herself, our condition would be very different."

"You do not seem to like the Spanish character of the government."

"I am Spanish, as you know, on my father's side, and proud of my race; but I am Cuban as well, and I see how the island suffers, as you will see, if you remain. I am also, in part, American, and how I long to see America take an interest in this beautiful but unfortunate land!" Her eyes almost filled with tears as she spoke, and she had forgotten even Carlos in her enthusiasm for the great object of her existence. "You, Mr. Secretary, ought to be able to know, and, what is more, to do," she went on, glowing with excitement and losing herself in her theme; her cheeks flushing, her bosom heaving, her whole form instinct with noble emotion. "You are in the American Government; what a great opportunity you have! Think of saving this wonderful, magnificent, exuberant country, with its miserable millions, from the destiny hanging over it. Do you know that we here are on the brink of great events, possibly great calamities? That there are disturbances occurring, insurrections plotting on every side? Dissatisfaction is universal; the planters are losing everything. The slaves are freed, but destitute; the poor are becoming poorer, and all our men are flying to arms. There will be anarchy and rebellion desolating the country in less than a year; harsh measures of repression exciting the people to harsher reprisals; civil, possibly servile war—all at the door of your country, all within sight, almost, of your shores; and all this your government might terminate if it chose."

Bainbridge listened to her impassioned eloquence, admiring more the tones and gestures and glances by

which it was accompanied and enforced, than influenced by its cogent appeals. Still, he perceived that what she was saying was important, and he recognized that it corroborated what the absent subordinate had reported. It was worth while listening, and even inducing her to say more, if only to enjoy the fascinations of her beauty in its animated and most glorious phase. For the girl's whole countenance beamed with her interest in her theme; her form even seemed to dilate with the intensity of her emotion. She was like some inspired priestess under the influence of her deity.

"How can we do anything in such a crisis?" inquired the American.

"By showing an interest in us to the world, and especially to Spain. If you will not at once send forces to aid an insurrectionary movement—by indicating at Madrid that the oppressions must cease; that a down-trodden race must be allowed to rise; by declaring that you will support us if we attempt to govern ourselves. And more than this," she added, "by announcing that you will no longer permit the outrages that are daily offered here to your own citizens, and the insults to your flag and your government. Why, only yesterday my own brother, an American citizen, was arrested, and now lies confined in the Morro Castle. He may lie there for months without a trial. Why not make this an opportunity to assert your power?" Then gliding at once to her nearer theme, and losing for a while the patriot in the woman, she began, in tones of entreaty touched with tenderness at the thought of Carlos and his danger: "Oh, Mr. Secretary, he is your countryman, and you personally can save him. You can interpose your great influence even with the

Captain-General; he cannot deny you. Will you not obtain his release? Do not let him languish in the dungeons of that terrible castle. Promise me that you will intervene; I beg you—I implore.”

The change from the inspired sibyl to the pleading woman was absolute, and no man with a soul could be insensible to such beauty in such attitudes. With her dark hair streaming behind her, her plain white robe caught up simply with a garnet-colored ribbon, not a jewel on neck or bosom or on her beautiful arms, she was the very incarnation of loveliness in distress, and the Secretary, before he had time to recover his composure, replied: “If I can do anything for you, señorita, be assured it shall not be lacking. I will look into this matter to-morrow, and see what is in my power.”

“Oh! thank you—thanks,” she exclaimed. “I know you will be all-powerful. They will not dare to provoke the United States too far.”

But the petty nature of the man had begun already to assert itself, and he bethought him that he must not quarrel with the government of Cuba at the moment when he wished to bargain with it. So he made haste to say: “You must not hope too much; I am not here as the representative of my government. I am not accredited to your own. I know not even if I am entitled to speak on political subjects at all.”

“Oh! put away these scruples of etiquette,” she replied, “and act like a man of genius and force and heart! The authorities know your position, and you cannot divest yourself of its importance.”

“Yes,” thought the Secretary, “and I will use it, but not for your brother.”

Her words put ideas into the dullard’s brain that he

at once diverted to an ignoble end. The girl could not perceive their full effect, but her quick nature detected something unworthy in her companion ; she felt as if she had touched a snake, and recoiled from him as from something noxious. She discovered that the man had designs of his own, and was not in harmony with her fraternal feeling or her patriotism. Each felt, indeed, that a veil had been lifted for an instant, and something more revealed by the other than the outer world could see ; and then, each felt the intervention of a heavier barrier. Bainbridge was not fine enough in nature to appreciate the full effect of what had occurred, but he was aware of something that had not existed before, and was relieved when the party was summoned to dinner.

He did not take the marquesa to table as he had expected, for the Spaniards, like the English, pay little regard to any rank that does not correspond with their own, and as a rule put permanent position before official dignity. So the Conde de Casa-Nueva had the first place, and Bainbridge followed with the wife of the Segundo Cabo. He sat, however, on the left of his hostess, and thought to himself : "I must try my hand at diplomacy before the dinner is over." It was a pigmy in politics pitting himself against a great player, one who knew the game, and had already fathomed her opponent, although she had not seen his cards. She at once determined to force his hand. It was worth while knowing the object of this visit of a member of the American Government. It might be important to her husband and to Spain.

"Do you find much to interest you yet in Havana, Mr. Secretary ? The place is new to you, I suppose."

"I have never visited Cuba until now," he replied, "and am profoundly interested in both the country and the people; I know not which is the more worthy of study."

"If we can do anything to facilitate your studies, pray do not fail to apply to the General. I am sure he will be more than happy to serve you. You want to see a plantation, of course."

"Above all things. The condition of the planters and the negroes is especially interesting to me."

"If you have a day or two at your disposal next week, we intend visiting a friend some two or three hours from Havana by train, and should be delighted if we could persuade you to accompany us. We are allowed to invite our own party. Can you not make one?"

"I shall be charmed to do so, Marquesa, if my arrangements allow me to remain in Cuba so long."

"We are to start on Easter Monday, at nine o'clock, and arrive in time for a Cuban breakfast. I shall count on you, Mr. Secretary."

"I hope I may be able to avail myself of your kindness. But I came away hurriedly and unexpectedly, although I have long been intending to visit Havana."

"Indeed," thought the marquesa. "A sudden visit, yet long designed! I have discovered this much;" but of course she did not inquire his errand.

He, however, went on giving her information. "I must be back before the adjournment of Congress."

"Then his mission is political."

Bainbridge felt, he scarcely knew how, that she was penetrating his designs, and, aware that he had blundered, he determined, like most blunderers, to go on, in the hope of recovering his ground.

"We are hoping, you probably know, for of course you are in the counsels of your government—we are hoping to draw nearer the commercial relations of the United States with both Cuba and Spain. I suppose there are points on which all our interests agree, and means by which they may be promoted together."

"I wish it may prove so," the marquesa replied, not committing herself.

"Yes," he continued, without observing her reticence, "it ought to be possible for the authorities of each country to benefit those whom they represent, and gain *at least* credit for themselves;" emphasizing the words at least, and looking directly into the marquesa's eyes, which opened wide at his glance, but betrayed no response to the insinuation it conveyed.

She simply replied: "Governments and authorities always have opportunities, if they have the skill to use them; and can sometimes make them, when they are not ready to their hands."

He deemed this great encouragement, and was about to rush at once into suggestions and propositions; but the great lady was satisfied with her discovery and with the work she had done, and before Bainbridge could betray himself further she had turned to her neighbor on the right, and was discussing the condition of Carlos. The Secretary found no other opportunity for diplomatic negotiation that evening, for the marquesa was determined to carry her information to her husband before she went further.

She saw, however, that the American thought he had great designs, and that they were not creditable to him. She surmised also that they were his own, and not those of his government. She could not believe that

this raw youth, who had in five minutes allowed her to perceive his character and half detect his plans, could possibly have been intrusted with any affair of importance by his superiors. Still she knew his political position, and his relationship with his chief; and from the Spanish Minister at Washington, who had warned her in advance of his coming, she had learned his personal intimacy with the wife of the President. It was possible that there was a significance in his visit, after all. A dull tool is sometimes that selected by a skillful workman, for a peculiar task. Too sharp an instrument may cut the hand that uses it. But, in any event, it was necessary to consider and discuss her discovery before taking any step with this indiscreet negotiator.

"Señor Conde," she said, in a low tone to Casa-Nueva, "I trust your son has not committed himself very far."

"I cannot tell, Marquesa; but he left my house only an hour or two before he was captured. He can hardly have been guilty of an overt act. But I had promised before I started to send any prisoners I took at once to the Morro; and I kept my word. My son is there."

"What do you think of Catalina's idea that this young American should interest himself?"

"It may be feasible; there is nothing but the mere fact that Carlos was with the party to identify him with Agüero."

"Is it certain that they were part of Agüero's band?"

"I fear so, señora. All the disaffected, or at least all who are in arms in our part of the island, are under his orders."

"Is the disaffection so wide-spread, then?"

"Yes; it reaches far and wide. There are many of

the better class, even planters, who wish Agüero well, though they dare not avow it ; and are even willing to suffer something at his hands for the cause which they consider their own. The country is in a sad condition."

"Do you suppose my neighbor comes down to spy us out ?"

"I cannot say. His visit is timed for something."

"Why do you imagine it is made in the absence of Mr. Ernest, the regular representative of the United States ?"

"Perhaps to give the consul more definite orders before his return ; perhaps to verify his statements ; perhaps because Ernest is not in reality in the confidence of his government, and they do not wish him to know their plans."

"Altogether a singular circumstance."

The marquesa recollected the suggestion of the Secretary, and thought she could add a surmise of her own ; but she was discreet, and kept her suspicions for her government.

Meanwhile Catalina, who sat next the Captain-General, had not failed to find a chance to speak of Carlos.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Excellency," she said ; "and I think you know it before I ask."

"You want permission to see your brother, is it not so, Catalina ?" for he was old enough and intimate enough to address her thus familiarly.

"Yes, General, I do. I want to see him to-morrow."

"I will send you the permit early in the morning," he replied. "But caution Carlos not to say or do anything to make his imprisonment more stringent. I cannot interfere in the prison rules without doing him absolute harm. You know the feeling that exists among

the Volunteers. They dismissed one Captain-General not so long ago. And remember the fate of the students."

Catalina shuddered at the suggestion, and determined to leave nothing undone to insure her brother's escape from such possibilities.

"Do not be alarmed. I only say this to secure that you both may be on your guard. Do not let him try to escape, or attempt to bribe his sentinels. Urge him to submit in silence, and to hope for what comes from delay."

"Delay, indeed," thought Catalina. "I know too well what delay in a Spanish dungeon means." But she only thanked the General, and said she would visit her brother the next afternoon.

They sat at table a little more than an hour, and then returned to the salas, where a few early-comers had already arrived. Before ten o'clock the rooms were filled with a well-dressed and well-mannered company. Not many of the women were handsome, but here and there was one of surpassing beauty; all had fine hair and eyes, but their complexions were plastered with powder in the most unbecoming style, till it dropped upon their clothes. Nearly all were graceful, though the Cubans are stiff and provincial in their manners, all rising every time an acquaintance enters or leaves a room, and a new-comer finds it necessary to make the circuit and shake hands with each in the most elaborate manner. The *estradas*, of which there were three or four, were all filled, and a round ottoman at the centre of the largest room was the only seat that invited approach or society. The men for the most part were in evening dress, but some in frock-coats, the usual

garb in Cuban society, unless on occasions of the highest ceremony. The officers, of course, wore uniform.

The cigars tempted most of the men into the corridor, where they sauntered arm-in-arm, or played *tressilia*—the fashionable Cuban game at cards—or chess; or gazed down into the court-yard at the orderlies below. A few, more gallant or more courageous than the rest, ventured into the inner rooms, and paid their court; but even these stood around the doors together, and looked in more often than they entered.

Soon after ten the little concert began. An amateur pianist played an overture, and then followed a concerted piece, after which Catalina sang with exquisite pathos, Cherubini's "Ave Maria." Her voice, which in conversation was low and rich, in singing became a high and flexible soprano. It was exquisitely cultivated, for she had studied under the best masters of Paris and Madrid, and absolutely rivalled some of the greatest artists of the day. Her taste was perfect, and her method beyond praise. Then came a quartette by other singers; and finally the great "Quis est Homo," from Rossini's "Stabat Mater," by the marquesa and Catalina—a delightful performance, full of passion and meaning. The marquesa's full mezzo-soprano voice, reaching at times to a contralto register, combined and contrasted admirably with the bird-like quality of the younger singer's notes. Both were musicians; both knew the composer's meaning, and were able to express it. The marquesa, especially, was religious, and Catalina was under the spell of several profound emotions, so that the two great women sang with their whole souls attuned to great things; and it seemed that the human character of the Catholic religion was hardly ever bet-

ter voiced in sound. Country, brother, lover—all were suggested to Catalina by the master's mighty numbers, and the Castilian, knowing part of the agitation of her companion, was affected by it, and participated in the passion of the rendering.

The audience was silent when the music ceased. There was no applause. All felt that what they had heard was beyond ordinary compliment. After a few moments the greatest lady present rose and made her adieux. This was the signal for the others, and ere long the halls were as empty as before. Catalina was nearly the last to leave ; and the marquesa whispered :

“ Have you accomplished anything ? ”

“ I do not know, but I fear not,” was the reply. “ He does not seem to possess a soul.”

“ And I have found out that he has no brains. Strange man to make an Under Secretary of State, and send here on an important errand ! But do not be discouraged, Catalina. We may yet find means to reach, if not to move him. The General tells me you are going to see your brother to-morrow, and bids me urge you both to caution. Let him do nothing to commit himself further, and render leniency impossible. Good-night, dearest. What a happiness it is to sing with you ! ”

Bainbridge and Fisher went away next, neither very well satisfied with the result of the evening. Bainbridge felt that he had made no success in any direction. He had at first been struck by Catalina's beauty, and hoped for some amusement, during his stay in Havana, from her society ; but he was selfish, and did not wish to be annoyed with caring for her brother, and he felt that she had detected his selfishness and despised him for it. He was, besides, distressed at his own ignorance.

He could not tell whether or not it was his place to interfere. If he should do so, the intricacies of the questions that might arise alarmed him, for he had not now the experience of the State Department to fall back upon, and the mistakes that he might commit made cold sweat break out all over him; while if it was his duty to exert himself and he failed to do so, he would be censured by the country. Then, too, he had made no progress with the marquesa: he felt that he had told more than he had learned, and given more than he had received—had been out-matched by a woman—and this was not a pleasant reflection for the rising diplomatist.

As for Fisher, he had not been noticed—had made no social progress whatever—and nobody except those who sat at table would know where he had dined. He consoled himself by the thought that to-morrow would be the great day. Then they were to see the custom-house officials, and he would come out strong when Spanish and subsidies were to be the means and the end. He accompanied his master to his hotel, and they agreed to meet at the same place at nine in the morning, for tropical hours are early.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MORRO CASTLE.

THE Captain-General did not forget his promise, and when Catalina returned from early mass with her duenna, she found a messenger with the required permit, and a note stating that in order to secure the señorita from all possible annoyance, an aide-de-camp would be in waiting to escort her across the bay, and show her to the fortress. Her father proved to be unwell—ill indeed, stricken by anxiety for his son—and utterly unable to accompany her, so that the thoughtful courtesy of the Captain-General was most acceptable.

In the afternoon, accordingly, at about five o'clock, when the fiercest heats of the day were past, the unhappy sister sallied forth to visit her brother in his prison. The elderly person, without whom, according to Cuban etiquette, she could not be seen in the streets, unless indeed with her father or Carlos, sat by her side in the closed carriage; for even with the sanction of such a companion, the unmarried, and indeed the married ladies of Havana are averse to the semblance of publicity.

They arrived at the wharf, where two small boats were waiting, and Catalina and her attendant entered one, while the aide-de-camp followed closely in another. He was the same who had been with the family at the

ingenio, and had been selected for this duty because he was supposed to be intimate. Don Ramon de Arriete, it has been said, was profoundly in love with Catalina. No woman is unconscious of such an emotion in the man who is often with her, and as there was no possibility of returning his regard, she regretted at first that this opportunity for his presence had been afforded. He, however, was so respectful, so considerate in indicating his sympathy in manner only, not in words, so careful to repress himself, that the girl was touched by the delicacy of his demeanor. His breeding or his instincts taught him exactly how to act in this emergency. There was an almost imperceptible tenderness in his tone, a greater deference than usual in his bearing, but no approach to consolation, no mention even of Carlos, his friend, unless Catalina herself should broach the theme.

Arriete had spoken of his feelings both to the conde and to his children, and the father encouraged his pretensions, for the young man came of an ancient Spanish family, and, though not rich, might possibly inherit fortune and titles of great distinction. His character was irreproachable, and he had never been thought lacking in spirit or refinement. Carlos had no objection to Arriete, if his sister approved, except that he was a Spaniard; but Catalina had given the young man no encouragement, even before she had seen Agüero, and now his suit was distasteful. The aide-de-camp, however, was ignorant of the impression she had received, and as he had not been peremptorily refused, his hopes were still buoyant. His distress at the terrible calamity that had overtaken his mistress was evidently acute, and his subdued manner and anxious deference made

his companionship after a while not unacceptable, in spite of the embarrassment of their relations.

The Morro Castle is situated at the extremity of a long and tapering promontory, projecting into the Atlantic on the north-east shore of the bay of Havana. Morro is the old Spanish word for snout, and the resemblance to that feature in a beast is sufficient to account for the name. The strait leading into the harbor is not more than two or three hundred yards across, and this narrowness continues for half a mile before the passage widens into the famous and beautiful bay. Havana lies on the southern and western shore, along both the inlet and the bay; while on the opposite bank stretches a series of fortifications, once almost impregnable, and which have been pronounced still formidable by the highest military authorities. These are the fortresses of the Morro and the Cabaña: the former commanding the sea approaches, and the territory to the north and east, where, however, a landing was effected by the British in 1762; while a quarter of a mile inward, on the heights overlooking the town, stands the Castillo de la Cabaña, in reality an extension of the Morro, connected with it by subterranean passages, as well as by a military covered-way, and a natural path at the foot of the hills extending along the shore. Toward the bay the ridge rises to the height of a hundred feet, and the face is so steep as to be inaccessible.

Two other forts complete the circle of the defences of Havana. The Atarés, the smallest of all, is at the head of the bay, about two miles from the entrance, picturesquely perched on an eminence, from which its guns command a portion of the harbor as well as the interior country; while on another hill-top, a mile and

a half west of the bay, and half a mile from the northern coast, rises the Castillo del Principe, the largest and most important of the fortifications. The whole circle is skilfully planned and admirably placed for military purposes.

These works add very greatly to the picturesqueness of the landscape, which, even without them, is almost unrivalled. The Morro, jutting into the sea, with its high signal tower at the extremity, the point fortified on every side, and rising abruptly out of the ocean, the natural rock and the artificial walls forming a single abutment, and making the fort appear the outgrowth of the base; then the long stretch of the Cabaña on the crest of the ridge, reaching to the point where the inlet widens; on the opposite shore the pale city, built for the most part of coral rock, and stuccoed over with light blue and pink and yellow, with the palace and the cathedral and other imposing structures towering above the level roofs; not a chimney to be seen, nor a cloud of smoke in the transparent tropical atmosphere, for there are no fires necessary in Havana, except once or twice a day for cooking purposes; the bay, dotted with the sails of many nations, Spanish and American predominating, with here and there a man-of-war, or a huge steamer just arrived from Barcelona or New York—all these make up a picture unique and fascinating in its loveliness. The great vessels are obliged to discharge their loads by lighters, so that the water swarms with small boats, while the constant intercourse between the forts and barracks on the northern shore, and the authorities in Havana, adds life and variety to the scene.

In the distance, the sloping hills make a rim of verd-

ure, with lofty palms breaking the outline to trace themselves against the sapphire sky. Among these the Atarés rises on its pyramidal peak like Sion in the valley of the Rhône; and here and there a white Cuban villa gleams through the foliage, or a tall spire pierces the pellucid air. Away to the west the massive Principe sits on its heights like a tyrant on his throne, frowning over all, and dominating the creole capital quite as effectually as it guards it against a foreign foe. To the north, across the flat city, glimpses can be got of the green and glistening sea, ordinarily as smooth as a crystal floor, but, in a storm, the breakers dash higher than the light-house of the Morro. Over all hangs the bluest of skies and the clearest of atmospheres, deepening every color, defining every line, and giving sharpness and brilliancy to all.

Catalina, followed by Arriete, was speedily rowed across the narrow neck of water to the foot of the Morro. They landed, and passed through a group of soldiers who paid little attention to the anxious visitors. Then, turning to the left, they began to mount a long, inclined and paved ascent that runs outside the ramparts up to the entrance of the castle. The great doors were open; the sentinels recognized the aide-de-camp, and the party proceeded to the head-quarters of the guard. Catalina waited in a casemate converted into a guard-room, and while an officer examined the permit for her to visit the prisoner, Arriete remained in the corridor. After a few moments a second officer appeared, and they were led along several paved but uncovered courts, among piles of shell and solid shot, under the shadow of heavy guns looming over the parapets, past grated walls with prisoners staring

through, by knots of soldiers cleaning their arms, or others preparing their meals, until finally they arrived at the cell where Carlos was confined.

The door was only an iron grating, for in the Cuban climate air is indispensable, even for prisoners ; and to shut a man absolutely behind impenetrable walls might insure a speedy termination of his sufferings, and this is not always desirable to his gaolers. The clanking of the keys and the grating of the locks fell harshly on Catalina's ears, but the sounds preluded her admission to her brother, and she heard them gladly. The iron bars were opened, and she passed into the cell, followed only by old Anita. Arriete and the other officer remained on the outside. The gate was locked behind her, and at first she could not discover her brother in the darkness. There was no window, and the only light came through the grating by which she had entered. The chamber was a bare stone cell, narrow and oblong, with a vaulted roof ; it was close and disagreeable in smell, and at the further end, on a cot, with a single blanket under him, Carlos was stretched, alone. A wooden dish and cup stood on the floor beside him, with a mess of meat and bread untouched, for he had not been sufficiently overcome by hunger to be able to taste the unfamiliar fare. He was not allowed a knife with his food, and the wine was strong and coarse.

The young man was not asleep, but lay brooding gloomily, and at first did not look up, supposing his gaoler had come to remove the distasteful meal.

"Carlos, dear Carlos!" exclaimed his sister, and the youth sprang to his feet at the sound of her voice.

"Catalina, you here, my darling! Sit here beside me. My cot is the only chair."

He placed her by him, straining her to his bosom, while the girl wept bitterly. She had held up bravely until now ; but when she was alone with him in his dungeon, and saw his actual, material wretchedness, the sense of his still greater danger became more acute, and she broke down completely. Her brother soothed her while she sobbed ; he removed her mantilla, and stroked her long dark hair, kissing her forehead again and again, and talking to her as to an infant.

"There, there, my child. You must be calm. Do not cry so, dearest. Stop, sister ; stop, for my sake !"

But her paroxysm continued, until at last he exclaimed : "Catalina, you will unman me, and I need all my nerve. Your visit will harm me, darling, if you give way thus."

This appeal touched her, and she made a violent effort, and controlled her grief. Holding herself off and looking at him penitently through her tears, she said : "Forgive me, Carlos. I am not worthy of you. It is you who suffer, you who are in danger, and I should come to sustain and comfort you, not to unnerve you. Forgive me, dearest ; I will not sin again. But oh, my brother, to see you here !"—and as she looked at his bare pallet, and at the gloomy walls, her strength nearly gave way again ; but she choked her sobs, and said : "I will be brave for your sake. Tell me, Carlos, how it all happened."

For she had not talked with him since his capture. Her father had thought it best to separate them entirely, both at the ingenio and on the train, lest the troops should comment on his leniency ; for all the officers of the Volunteers were under the yoke of their own soldiers.

Then came a long talk between brother and sister, Catalina now encouraging Carlos, and informing him of her efforts with the American Secretary. But the youth had little hope from this source. He had seen too many Americans languish in Spanish gaols without a trial, and declared that in a neighboring cell there now lay a man entrapped ashore from an American vessel a year before, accused of political crime, and whose release, or even trial, the American Government had never demanded.

"My adopted country," he continued, "cares nothing for its Cuban citizens. It neglects us, and leaves us to droop and die. Did it ever avenge the murders of the *Virginians*? or even punish the outrages on native-born Americans? No, Catalina, do not hope for help from the United States. But I will tell you," he said; "I have other hopes. Agüero will find means to rescue me. If I could once, by either disguise or bribe, get beyond that grating after sundown, I am sure I could pass the sentinels. If I had a soldier's dress," he exclaimed, his imagination coming to his aid, "I could scale the great ditch, and Agüero would meet me with a boat at the shore, near Cogimar."

Catalina was startled at the suggestion, coming so soon after the warnings of the Captain-General and the marquesa. She repeated these to Carlos, who replied: "It is all very well, sister, but if I remain here, I am useless to the cause, and I cannot possibly be in greater danger than now. All I ask is to be beyond those gratings and in soldier's uniform."

At that moment Arriete passed before the entrance, and an idea flashed across Catalina's mind. If Arriete would assist, she might rescue her brother.

"Carlos," she said, "I promise you that, unless within a week the American Secretary takes some definite step in your behalf, I will communicate with Aguero."

"Now, sister, you talk like yourself, with the spirit of our race. I would be willing to suffer in order to owe my freedom to you and to Aguero—you two people, who have the same object in life, whom I so love, and who love me so tenderly. You could save me by working with my noble chief."

Catalina felt that there would indeed be a new and a sacred bond between herself and the patriot, if together they could rescue her brother. She was certain already that Aguero was anxious and distressed for the fate of the lad whom he had brought into so great peril, and would risk his life readily for his comrade. Again Arriete passed before the grating, and again the sight suggested the means. If Arriete could be won by her entreaties, if he would allow a soldier's uniform to be brought within those bars, if he would open the door for an instant only, her brother might be freed. She said nothing of her thought to Carlos; so much depended on others, so much was uncertain, that she would not excite his hopes, but changed the theme.

After a few moments, promising to come again daily, if she might be allowed, and to bring better food and wine, a change of linen, and perhaps to send a bed—something for material comfort—blessing him, commending him to the Virgin and all the saints, pledging herself to pray hourly, momentarily, for his release, and not only to pray, but to work incessantly, she rose. They embraced each other once more, tenderly, but now each was firm. The lad, indeed, had been so all

along, and Catalina was ashamed of her momentary weakness. Carlos walked to the grating with her, holding her hand. Arriete summoned the gaoler, the gates were unlocked, and she walked out, not daring to look back, while Carlos watched her receding form, clad now in black, and shrouded in her long lace veil.

When she arrived at home, she found at the door a messenger, an old negress, with a note which she was waiting to deliver into the señorita's hand. Catalina had no mother, and had been so long at the head of her father's house that it was not strange she should receive communications without that supervision to which most Cuban maidens must submit. She took the note without opening it, for there was nothing unusual in its appearance, and went first of all to her father. He was sleeping, for the first time that day, and the physician had given orders that he should not be disturbed; there was danger of a fever. The emotions of the last forty-eight hours had been too violent for the venerable Spaniard; the danger to his son he knew was very real, and he saw no prospect of relief. He was quite overcome. Without wakening him, Catalina passed to her own apartment, and there opened her note. The writing was clear and bold, but unfamiliar; and she looked for a signature, but found none, nor any date but Monday. It read as follows:

"SEÑORITA:

"You will know the writer, for you know how deeply I must feel for the youth led into peril through my means. Doubt not that I will rescue him for higher duties. I will be at the cathedral on Holy-Thursday, at sundown, behind the second column from the high altar, on the right. I can there tell you how we may

save your brother. For the sake of Carlos, come. You will not fear to meet him whom you have declared to be no brigand, and

“Who kisses your feet,

“and is your servant always, and

“COMPATRIOT.”

There could, indeed, be no doubt as to the writer. Only one man would address the Doña Catalina de Casa-Nueva in this language; only one knew the circumstances that he mentioned; only one would venture to propose to her a rendezvous, and he, only for one purpose. The girl trembled, half with hope for her brother, and half at the thought of meeting again the chief who had already awakened in her so deep an interest. She would go to the cathedral, for it was to save Carlos; but her agitation was extreme. She, a Cuban maiden, to meet a man by appointment, almost secretly, whom she had seen but once! and he a plotter against the government and the cause to which her father was allied! She felt that she was, indeed, involved in the meshes of a conspiracy, with no one to consult, none to advise her, none to sympathize; for she dared not relieve herself by a word. The barest suspicion would increase the peril of her brother, and bring new dangers on the head of him whom she now looked upon as the chief of her cause.

She little dreamed what it had cost Agüero to write the note. She knew nothing of his agony of soul when he bade the thought of Alonzo down; of the remorse he felt as he dismissed the vision of the murdered boy, and wrenched the hope of revenge from his heart. The doom of his brother hung over the son of his enemy, yet both for honor and love he must save the child of Casa-Nueva.

Of all this conflict and whirlwind of passion Catalina of course was ignorant. But still, she thought, how chivalric in Aguero to risk himself for his comrade! How loyal! How worthy he is to be the chief! How fitting a representative of Cuba! And she, a timid girl, was yet able to serve both cause and brother, and to work with this noble man in their behalf. She nerved herself for every effort, and to gain strength betook herself to prayer. Calling Anita, she declared she would go to the cathedral and pray for her brother. It was almost dark, and Anita thought the hour too late; but Catalina was imperious, and used to being obeyed.

"It is not too late for Carlos to suffer," she exclaimed, "and it cannot be wrong for his sister to go to God's house to pray for him. If I incur any danger the act will be looked upon as meritorious, and be counted in his favor. God and his saints can be approached more closely in the temple set apart for their worship."

They entered the cathedral. Its vast proportions loomed grand and awful in the darkness, like the power of the Almighty. The great stone pillars holding up the lofty roof seemed giant guardians of the faithful in their hour of trial, and the twinkling lights on the distant altar and in the chapels of the aisles guided the stumbling steps of the supplicants. Crossing themselves, and taking holy-water at the entrance, they passed along the nave, unimpeded now, for the throngs of the day were gone; only here and there a penitent was seeking consolation before a favorite shrine. Most of the worshippers were women, but one or two old men in rags were kneeling in a corner with their beads. The silence was profound.

Catalina found the second column from the altar, on the right, and knelt there, Anita beside her. Was it all religion? Was it anxiety for her brother? Was it patriotism? Was there, perchance, mingled with these deep and genuine emotions, a desire to be near the spot where she was again to see the man to whom, unconsciously to herself, she had given her heart? It was no ordinary trysting-place, and under ordinary circumstances the girl would at once have declined the meeting; but this appointment was made sacred to her not only by its object, but by the spot where it was to be fulfilled. Catalina was calmed and soothed in advance. She prayed long and fervently and purely, and returned to watch with her father, comforted and inspired.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSPIRACY IN CUBA.

IN the morning, Fisher took his superior to the Café de Paris, in the Calle O'Reilly, the most famous restaurant in Havana. A spacious room at the entrance opened immediately on the street, with huge doors and windows reaching to the ground, but was screened from the tropical glare by an awning stretched completely across the roadway to the buildings opposite. Toward the back also all the passages were open, to catch the slightest breeze, while flowering oleanders, ranged in tubs along the marble floors, shut off the sights and odors of the Cuban kitchen beyond. The heat in the streets was stifling, but within, the temperature was delightful.

They seated themselves at a little table in one of the open spaces separated from the street only by iron gratings, and while their breakfast was preparing, these worthy servants of the United States discussed the preliminaries of a treaty between their country and Spain.

"I spoke a little of our plans to the marquesa last night," said Bainbridge, not choosing to announce to his subordinate how completely he had been foiled in that direction.

"Indeed! I am glad of that. And how did she receive your suggestions, may I ask?"

"Favorably; most favorably. But, as I was fairly

entering on my theme, an old Spaniard on her right interrupted, and I could get no other chance during the evening. When can I see her again?"

"It will be impossible to find her at all this week. She is very devout, and this is Passion-Week. She gives herself up exclusively to religion. Neither politics nor pleasure is allowed a moment of her time."

"The devil! Must I lose an entire week for her religion?"

"I am afraid so. If you should attempt to see her now, you would not succeed. But we can arrange our plans meanwhile. You can meet the Cuban merchants I told you of, and find out their views. And besides, you will be interested in the ceremonies."

"Not I. I have seen all that sort of thing in Rome. I should prefer a jaunt to Matanzas or to some of the other towns on the coast."

"Well, you will have plenty of time for the towns. But what if Ernest should arrive?"

"Oh, I will take care of him. I shall telegraph Go-Bright to detain him. He is to have an interview with my father before he starts, and the Secretary must go to the country for a week, so that Ernest will be obliged to wait for his return. Did I tell you I am invited to visit a plantation on Easter Monday with the Captain-General and the marquesa? There will be a party of fifteen or twenty, and we are to remain a day or two in the interior."

"That will be your opportunity. You can say all you please on a trip like that, develop your plans, and get a definite reply."

"But are you so sure she will be willing to listen?"

Fisher perceived that his superior had not made the

progress he pretended, but he was too good a subordinate to betray his suspicions, and simply replied : "She is universally credited with interfering in all the affairs of the island. Her influence with the Captain-General is paramount ; every suggestion is submitted to her. If you are to accomplish anything, we must reach her Excellency. And I advise that we do it soon, for the head of the Treasury here is on the brink of an open quarrel with the Captain-General. He is said to have great influence at Madrid, and might be able to thwart his superior. I think, however, we had better approach the marquesa."

"We," said the Secretary, superciliously, "will attempt it."

The clerk blushed, but tried to seem not to notice the rebuff, determining in his heart, however, to have his revenge at the earliest opportunity. He went on : "If you should, by any chance, fail at the palace, you could still fall back on the Treasury, which is sure to listen ; and it would be better, of course, to have both in our—your favor."

"By all means, by all means. But why not see the Treasury people while I am waiting?"

"Because of the rivalry I spoke of. If I might be allowed to suggest, I would say—Go first to the highest authorities, lest the palace people resent it, while the Treasury cannot be indignant because you observe the forms. At any rate, if they have an object they will swallow their pride. Now I am not sure the marquesa would do this—even for her interest."

"Well, you know the race. I suppose I had better take your advice. But what are these people likely to want?"

"They want everything. They want us first of all to take off the tax of ten per cent. on all goods arriving in the United States from Cuba in Spanish ships. They want us to help them collect their duties here in Cuba."

"The devil they do! How can we do that?"

"By exercising an espionage over all goods going from Cuba to the United States."

"Nice work for us! But how is it to be done?"

"Oh, they have it all arranged. They want our Treasury to order every custom-house in the United States to report to the Spanish consuls, whenever they require it, the exact amount and value of the goods arriving from Cuba."

"And pray—do these modest gentry want anything else?"

"Oh, yes; they want us to say nothing whatever against their regulations; not to attempt to interfere in behalf of American trade, or American ships, or American citizens. If you stir these matters, the whole thing will fall through, I assure you. They told me this positively."

"And why are they so determined on this point?"

"It is partly a matter of Spanish pride. Then, too, they want to rebuff and mortify Ernest, who has made himself peculiarly obnoxious to them. He has taken up the rôle of defender of American interests; raked up every old grievance, presented every new complaint, and given the officials more trouble than they have had in years. They hate him, and want him recalled. If you take up his cause, or the causes he has defended, you will accomplish nothing of your other purposes."

"Well, I have no love for him. He has pestered the department about American interests ever since he was

sent here. He would not enter into our schemes even if we would let him, and I don't intend to ask him. Whatever is to be gained here, I want. The President has promised that this shall be my treaty."

"Then it would be a good thing to do nothing that Ernest has suggested, lest he should get the glory."

"You are right. We must let the cursed American interests alone. What do we care for the Americans who come here to expatriate themselves, or the Spanish or Cuban born who thrust themselves under our flag?"

"If you let the subordinate authorities see how you feel on this subject, Mr. Secretary, they will soon be your allies. Ernest is in moderate favor at the palace; the General and the marquesa seem to like him, and he could do a good deal if our government were really behind him; but let the people here, especially in the Treasury, understand that you do not support him, and he may rave as long as he chooses. They will join hands with you in thwarting him."

"But why do you dislike him so much?"

"Because he is a meddling, overbearing fellow. He interferes in all my plans and arrangements. He insists on controlling every department of the consulate. He brings his notions of system and discipline into a Cuban office, and it is impossible to do anything without his knowing it or suspecting it. I had my own way in some things until he came. Now, every merchant who wants a favor must run the gantlet of his inspections or suspicions. There are two or three firms that I was often able to oblige, and they obliged me in return; but now they must be on the same footing with every one else. Then you know his ridiculous objections to smuggling. He quarrels with people who want to

serve him, and insists on paying duties for government furniture, when they can be avoided for a gratuity of not half the amount of the tax. Of course, when the people who make such arrangements, thinking to please him, are found out, they hate him. He is quite impracticable. Think of a man who will not smuggle, in Cuba! Why, every one smuggles here, and the people in the Treasury and the government most of all."

"Well, I can see why you hate him. As for me, I have my own reasons. He troubles us, as I say, to do things we have no intention of doing, and he wants the credit of initiating a great measure here, which I am determined shall be mine. The measure will be different enough from what he proposes, and when he finds this out, we can drive him into resigning. We shall have the glory, and there will be a vacancy here."

"If I could succeed to that!" thought the clerk, but he did not mention his aspirations.

"The first thing will be to secure the favor of the marquesa. I have told you how I think that can be done. When that is accomplished, we—you can talk up the details with the Treasury."

Some of the important merchants of the city now approached from a neighboring table, and Fisher presented them to his chief.

Russians, Germans, Americans, English, all resorted to this restaurant, where the table was supplied from a market equal to any in the world, and the kitchen was worthy of the *Café Voisin* or *Delmonico*; the dishes, perhaps, not so elaborate in composition, nor the sauces so highly seasoned, but quite as acceptable to a genuine epicurean taste. The novelty of the viands, the unfamiliar flavor of the Spanish wine, the grateful fresh-

ness of the tropical pines, and the aroma of the green Havana cigars were more than delectable; while the greetings of acquaintances in the street, as they stopped under the awning and chatted through the bars; even the cries of the lottery-ticket venders, who thrust their lists of putative prizes in at the windows; the soldiers and water-carriers and fruit-sellers; the beggars who lingered, and the gayly-dressed policemen who drove them away—all made a strange and fascinating beginning to the Cuban day for the young American.

They walked to the consulate not far away, and while Bainbridge was closeted with Fisher, discussing the matter which had brought him to Havana, the cards of the Condesa de Cordoba and the Doña Catalina de Casa-Nueva were brought in. It was of course impossible to refuse the visit, though the Secretary was certain that the girl had come to entreat his interposition for her brother. He was vexed at her pertinacity, but went at once to the anteroom where the ladies were waiting, both dressed entirely in black and wearing the mantilla. The condesa was an elderly relative, who had come with her niece to make the visit possible, for the conde was still unable to leave his house. Catalina looked more lovely than ever in the national costume, and the Secretary had to steel himself against her charms; but, fortified by his talk with Fisher, he succeeded, and led them gravely into the inner apartment.

It cost the girl an effort to make a second appeal when the first had been so unsuccessful, but for her brother's sake she was willing to stoop.

Presenting the condesa, she began at once: "I am sure you will pardon this intrusion, Mr. Secretary, for already you must know my errand."

He was silent and awkward, determined to give her no encouragement, and yet ashamed of his determination.

"Can you—will you make an effort to save my brother?"

"I must first ascertain the wishes of my government, señorita, but I will telegraph at once for instructions. I am only a subordinate, you know" (as if a prime minister should say, I am the servant of my sovereign). "Besides, I am not accredited here. The Captain-General might consider that I exceeded my privilege if I interfered. But I will represent the case at once at Washington, and let you know the result" (determining to report to her after some delay a negative reply). "I trust you are well, after our charming evening at the palace?"

"Yes, thank you; I am very well. But will you not urge the view I take; your representations must control in such a matter? My brother had hardly left our father's house when he was captured. May I tell you? he is an American."

"Certainly; let me hear all," he muttered, seeing no way to avoid her importunities. But he thought to himself: "The fellow is a brigand, and shall take his chance."

She told her story, urging the citizenship of Carlos, and that there was no proof of his complicity. He had not been an hour in the company of the other prisoners, and there was no evidence that even these were brigands. Carlos, at any rate, had committed no act for which an American citizen could be imprisoned. "Will you, above all," she said, "insure a speedy investigation? If not, my brother may lie in their dungeons for a year.

You do not know, Mr. Secretary, the customs here. When they dare not try a man, they hold him for months in prison, sometimes until he dies. This has been done with Americans. Do not, I implore you, allow it now."

Bainbridge finally directed Fisher to prepare a communication to the Captain-General, asking for the particulars of the case, that he might report them to the State Department. This would take time, and it showed an apparent interest; and despairing of obtaining more, Catalina was fain to accept what she perceived was only a perfunctory favor. She thanked the Secretary, however, but regretted that he offered his hand, for she could not well refuse it; and he waited on the ladies to their carriage.

Catalina said to herself, "Carlos is right. It is Agüero and ourselves on whom we must rely, and the only way to accomplish anything is through Arriete. I must see Don Ramon. I must encourage him a little, although I can never yield. Deception, in such a cause, may I not employ a little? I must save my brother, and Arriete only can assist me."

She begged her companion to accompany her to the palace, that she might obtain permission to take some more delicate food and wine to her brother, as well as a change of linen. The favor was not difficult to procure, and Arriete was directed to attend her each day in her visit; for the Captain-General was anxious that his young connection should prosper in his suit. Catalina's fortune from her mother was large, and the property being in the United States, her income was more secure than Cuban estates could promise at that period. So it was arranged that every afternoon

the aide-de-camp should escort the señorita to the Morro.

As he followed the condesa and his mistress down the great staircase to their carriage, Catalina said to her lover: "Will you not come to see my father to-day, before we start? He may have some message for Carlos, and I wish you to see what I take to my brother, so that there need be no examination at the prison." This would afford an opportunity for a moment's unwitnessed conversation with the man on whom so much depended; and an unwatched interview between a young man and woman of the higher rank in Cuba is of the most difficult attainment. Arriete, of course, was more than happy to promise prompt attendance. He would be able to serve his mistress, to show his anxiety to aid her, to be engaged with her for a moment in the same occupation, interested in the same purpose, perhaps in her society alone.

They bade each other good-bye, the girl allowing herself to look at him more kindly than ever before, but her conscience smote her a little as she drove away.

Ramon went early to the Casa-Nueva mansion, but Catalina was waiting for him. She had prepared a basket of meats and bread, a flask or two of wine, with a change of linen; and as she arranged the garments it occurred to her how easily the uniform of a soldier could be substituted for them, and left in the prison with her brother. The Spanish soldier's dress in Cuba is made of the lightest fabric, suitable for the climate, and could easily be enveloped in the clothes she was allowed to carry to Carlos.

Ramon was announced while this thought was in

her mind, and before he entered the whole plan was developed to her imagination. The uniform should be carried in the basket and concealed until darkness came; then Carlos could dress himself as a private soldier, and Ramon might easily pass in to see him, and in departing leave the key inside.

Arriete, too, was full of unformed but big designs. He had been turning over in his mind the situation of his friend and the misery of his mistress, and wondering what he could do to alleviate either, or to render himself more acceptable to Catalina. He could not witness her suffering without sharing it in some degree, and it had not failed to occur to him that if he could by any possibility assist in extricating Carlos from his peril, he would place the woman he loved under the greatest of imaginable obligations. Ramon brooded over these ideas, groping his way blindly after some solution, some clue out of the labyrinth, but as yet he had discovered none; all that he had arrived at was the certainty of his devotion to Catalina, and his determination to do whatever might lie in his power to comfort her and lessen her anxiety. He went up the stairs slowly, without the wonted eagerness of a lover, for his brain was busy with these cogitations, and he was dissatisfied that he had been unable as yet to determine in what way he could render himself essential.

Catalina greeted him sadly, but not without appreciation of his manifest sympathy. The young fellow's looks showed how genuinely he felt for her, and she was touched.

"Look, Don Ramon," she said, "I have arranged some bread and meats for my brother, and a flask of

wine—there can be nothing forbidden here—and this suit of linen clothes. You do not object?"

"Oh, no," he replied, "there is no reason why these should not be allowed." And then, breaking into the expression of that of which his heart was full, he cried, "Oh, señorita, why can I not take your brother's place and suffer for him? I would willingly do this to obtain some recognition from you that I had a brother's right to be interested."

"You have already a brother's right," said Catalina. "You are his friend."

"Ah! but I mean that especial right to the name of brother which under certain circumstances I might claim."

She could not pretend to misunderstand him, and was a little angered that he should broach the subject at this time. "I am in no mood to talk of such matters now, Don Ramon," she replied hastily, almost fiercely; "Carlos is in danger of his life, and at the hands of your country and your government. You are one of the authorities that imprison him. You are in some sort his gaoler, and you can hardly expect to recommend yourself to his sister in that capacity."

The youth was stung by the taunt, and the color mounted to his forehead. "If I were indeed his gaoler," he said, "I should have the opportunity to liberate him."

"My God!" thought the girl. "Give me strength." The thought, the same thought occurred to each at the same instant. "Ramon," she almost cried, "if you liberate my brother"—and her voice sank to a whisper—"you may claim what reward you will from me."

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"Catalina, do not tempt me. I am a soldier and a man of honor. But I love so tenderly, so terribly."

"Say no more, you reject me. I did not think my offer would be so lightly received. You might at least have considered it a moment."

"I do, I will. I have not rejected it. The thought is maddening to me. May I indeed hope?"

"Say nothing to me while my brother is in prison. You and your people are the cause of his danger. If you love me, prove it by interfering in his behalf."

He flung himself at her feet. "Dearest, I cannot resist you. I can refuse you nothing. What will you have me do? Whether you keep your word or not, I must do your will."

She held out her hand to him, and he kissed it, while tears of mingled love and shame rained over it. The conspiracy was sealed.

"What shall I do? my mistress!" and she did not rebuke the word, though she now was profoundly agitated. She had not until this moment discovered the state of her own heart; but when she pledged herself to Arriete, the image of Agüero at once arose, and she knew that her affections were not her own to bestow. The shock of the discovery was great, and her first impulse was to recall her words; but it was too late, and the thought of Carlos in his dungeon, deserted by his adopted country and condemned by his own, led out perhaps to be shot as a brigand, nerved her again. The young man was still kneeling before her, still holding her hand in an ecstasy of passion in which delight and horror contended; but having once fallen, he yielded to the rapture of the moment, and thought now only that Catalina had promised herself as his reward,

and that he must earn the prize. "What shall I do to win this hand? Tell me, Catalina; you have only to speak. I am absolutely your slave."

She bent over him till her long tresses hung upon his shoulders, and he felt the warm breath of her words, and looked into the very depths of her magnificent eyes, as she said: "We will save him, Ramon. You will save him; and you shall be *his* brother—not mine."

He hoped for a nearer embrace, although this was half elysium; but she approached no nearer, and seeing the beseeching look in his eyes, exclaimed:

"Not yet, my friend. We must think now of Carlos. You must forget yourself and me, and we must work together. Look at this garment I am taking to the Morro. Can I not just as easily at the appointed time convey a soldier's uniform, and if the gate should be left unlocked at night Carlos could pass out in this disguise unnoticed. So far I can devise. But then, can you enable him to pass guard? Can you send him on some errand that will take him beyond the hateful walls? There must be means to execute all this. Think of it carefully, closely, and to-morrow tell me if my plan is feasible. Now we should go and comfort our brother. Come."

He had risen meanwhile, and both were standing at a table with the basket she was arranging between them.

"Yes," he said, "I see a way; I will try. But we must wait a few days and prepare for what may occur if he is able to evade the guard. We must be more than careful. And I must think how I can gain possession of the keys."

They went together to see the prisoner.

Catalina found her brother not at all cast down. The expectation of her coming gave a buoyancy to his spirit, and he also had been turning over in his mind the chances and means of escape. When she told him of Agüero's note he at once exclaimed :

"I knew my chief would not forget me. He is known for his fidelity to his followers. But how daring in him to enter Havana, even in disguise! How can I ever be grateful enough to him! He will devise a means, be sure, my sister. I shall yet be able to do something for Cuba."

Catalina did not venture to tell him of her covenant with Ramon. She feared to raise his hopes too high, and she feared also that he might not be ready to expose his friend. Her own scruples on this point had not been silent, and she was unwilling to arouse them again, or to hear them set forth more fully by her brother. She thought if she could sacrifice her own love for the sake of Carlos she might be allowed to hazard the safety of Ramon. The sophistry was unworthy of her, but when one becomes involved in the tortuous paths of conspiracy, even disloyal means that promise success look less repellent than at other times. The great aims of country and brother's life seemed to her to sanctify devices that her generous nature would otherwise have rejected as uncongenial. But a glance at Carlos and his surroundings was sufficient to harden her heart.

When she left the castle the western sky was all ablaze with the glory of a Cuban sunset, and even in the turmoil of her emotions Catalina was distracted for a moment by the majestic grandeur of the scene. The sea was on her right, placid as an inland lake that has

never known a storm; azure now, and radiant as that rare gem which Eastern potentates prefer, the rays of the sun lighting all its surface far and near till it gleamed and shone like the luminary itself. At her feet stretched the narrow entrance to the bay of Havana; beyond it was the flat-roofed, light-walled city, with the fortress of the Principe guarding it sullenly on the west, and still further away the softened outline of distant mountains, purple and hazy, their summits tipped with gold, and only half distinguishable from the billowy masses of cloud that rested on them and touched them with a transmitted radiance. The long line of coast below shared in this reflected brilliancy, and burned and blazed with rock and sand where they bounded and barred the approach of the sea.

But the picture was in the sky—the most magnificent cloud region conceivable: waves of gold and purple and soft crimson were intermingled, with great spaces or gulfs breaking open among them, through which you got glimpses of some unknown and far-off universe—wonderful and delicious and cool; long streaks of sunshine shooting down athwart this background, and the gorgeous sun itself enveloped in a dazzling beauty quite undescribable; and all this congeries of light and cloud and color surging and seething with a peculiar effect never witnessed except within the tropics. For the atmosphere through which this panorama of the heavens is contemplated is itself of a clearness so extraordinary, and gives one such a sense of the extent of vision, that you seem really looking out upon another world.

CHAPTER X.

HOLY-THURSDAY IN HAVANA.

ON the afternoon of Holy-Thursday, having received no word from the American Secretary, Catalina, with her aunt and her duenna, walked to the cathedral. From ten o'clock on that day until ten on the morning of Saturday, at which hour Judas is supposed to have hung himself, no carriage or wheeled vehicle is allowed to pass in the streets of Havana. Even the Captain-General and his wife must go afoot, and as there is a pilgrimage to be made by the devout to seven different churches, the appearance of the streets on those days is entirely different from that they wear on every other in the year. Ordinarily no women of position, and indeed very few above the lower class, are ever seen walking in this city of old usages. Men and working-women seem to a stranger to compose the population. But on these two sacred days—the most sacred in the year in Catholic eyes—the entire female population proceeds afoot from church to church to adore the Blessed Sacrament. The women of Havana are undoubtedly religious. With them Catholicism appears to be more than a form or a function, though less regard is paid to the reality of religion by the men than in any other city of Christendom. There is absolutely no religion in Cuba among the men, Spanish or creole. On certain holidays the public offices and some of the shops

—not many—are closed; and on the most important festivals the Captain-General and the high officials go in state, unwillingly, to mass, and their presence and paraphernalia attract a crowd; but there is only a semblance of devotion among the male spectators. Every Cuban must indeed be baptized and buried by the Church: he cannot receive the rights of citizenship without the former ceremony; he cannot be placed in consecrated ground without the consent of the priests at the last; so that he must enter and leave the world according to rule; but in the interval he pays very little attention to the established religion of his country.

The pageantry of Holy-Week, however, and especially the observances of Thursday and Friday, are exceptional. The women even then do not often walk alone, but in the cool of the day the head of the family accompanies his wife and daughters in their peregrinations from shrine to shrine, through the narrow streets and across the little plazas in the old part of Havana. Sometimes even the sons and brothers are added to the party, and many a pretty family group can be seen entering or issuing from a quaint old building with a bare façade, the lights on the high altar gleaming through the open doors. For there is a very genuine family feeling existing in Cuba, hidden indeed very much from the outer world; the mothers and daughters are not only good and loyal themselves, but their fidelity and affection are appreciated. It is true they have little opportunity to do wrong; their male relatives do not seem to trust them to themselves, to their own principles or feelings, or even to the sentiments of religion. No women in any civilized country are

guarded so closely as Cubans. A married lady of high position cannot drive out alone without exciting comment, and a young or unmarried girl is never seen out of her father's or her guardian's house unaccompanied. The usage is so established that its observance in any individual instance indicates no suspicion. A violation would simply be too conspicuous for a delicate-minded woman to subject herself to the notoriety it would occasion.

But in Holy-Week custom relaxes the rule. The streets are thronged with ladies, and as the side pavements are extremely narrow, the groups very generally take to the carriage-ways, which are free from vehicles and swept for the occasion. The cessation of all the ordinary noise of rolling wheels in a city of 200,000 inhabitants is hardly more noticeable than the sudden disappearance of carriages and carts, and drays and drivers, and the substitution of gay and often elegant women and their families. The men on this day wear their high black hats and frock-coats, the elder females without exception the mantilla, but the girls of the higher class, and those who imitate them, for the most part wear hats with flowers but no veils. All, of course, are clad in summer garments, light silk or muslin fabrics; few with shawls or outer cloaks of any description, though many of the older ladies are shrouded in black, and the mantilla, sometimes white as well as black, relieves the figure from the appearance of bareness or exposure. The whole effect is gay and agreeable; the people are satisfied with themselves for having performed a religious duty; the families are happy in being together; acquaintances greet each other going in and out of the various churches;

and the entire observance is pleasing as well as peculiar.

As in all Catholic countries, the distinctions of rank disappear at once when the worshippers enter the House of God. Before the Sacrament the greatest ladies wait patiently till a crowd of negroes have finished their devotions and there is room for them to kneel. A file of soldiers or sailors is often marshalled in, and the rough men doff their caps, cross themselves, and repeat their prayers as reverently and apparently as earnestly as more important personages, probably with more faith than the officer who leads them in. There is no actual service during the period allotted for these pilgrimages. The churches are all thrown open, the altars lighted, the Sacrament exposed, and effigies of the bleeding Christ are placed conspicuously to receive the homage of the worshippers. People come in and pray a few moments in the crowd, and then make way for others, and themselves proceed to another church, till the prescribed devotions are performed.

Catalina was spending these two days with her aunt, the condesa, so that she might be near the churches, which are mostly situated in the old, low part of the town, by the bay, while the Casa-Nueva mansion was without the city walls. The condesa lived in the Calle de Cuba, a long and narrow street not far from the palace and the cathedral and the wharves—the quarter where many of the grandees still retain their houses, built centuries ago in the Spanish style. From here, too, Catalina could more readily take the boat for her daily visit to the Morro. Her father was better, and she had been able to leave him for these two days, which were to be devoted to religion and to her brother ;

for even her interest in Agüero she still tried to think was because he might aid Don Carlos.

As she wended her way, however, with her aunt to the cathedral, having made her appointed orisons elsewhere, she felt that her interest quickened, and despite herself she was obliged to admit in her inmost heart that Agüero shared in the emotion of the hour, which should have been sacred to another feeling. She had been very unhappy since her interview with Arriete, although she had now a prospect of her brother's release. The price she was to pay for the ransom was high, higher than she had thought until she actually offered the prize. She was continually asking herself—"What would Agüero think of her bargain? Would he be touched by her sacrifice? Would it pain him to know that she had promised herself to another?" She had, however, little doubt of this, and wondered whether he would reproach her in his heart, if he knew all. Would he not say, "I too am risking life to save Don Carlos. Why should I not have the reward?" It was hard, indeed, when he ventured as much as the other, when both offered all, that she must recompense the one to whom she was indifferent, and leave him unhappy whom she in reality preferred. The torture to which she was subjected was not calculated to calm her mind for her devotions. She prayed, indeed, all the more fervently, yet her prayers were rather for temporal relief and human solace than for religious support. She was like too many of us, more anxious for pardon than penitent for the offence. It was the future rather than the past that she presented at the shrine.

At last they came to the cathedral. It stands on one side of a square, with a plain façade, not unlike that

of the cathedral at Como, though without its beauty. The architecture is debased Gothic; two towers not very high relieve the front, and the building has a certain venerable dignity of its own, though no high artistic pretensions. It is approached by three or four broad steps and a wide pavement, covered now with throngs of penitents and gazers, passing in and out from devotion or curiosity; mostly with the former purpose, however, for all Cubans are familiar with these ceremonies, and though, like Southern peoples generally, they are fond of shows, they prefer them out of doors, where there is more life and movement and color and gayety.

Catalina and her aunt made their way through the crowd, the girl leading slowly, so that she might not seem to seek too earnestly the appointed spot. As she advanced to the second column on the right, she trembled, and hardly dared look up; but there, in the uniform of a captain of Volunteers, with his cap held so as to cover a part of his face, but his fine eyes searching eagerly into the approaching throng, stood the man whom she knew now, if she had doubted before, that she preferred among all human beings. Her heart throbbed so hard she thought it must betray her. She almost fancied that she heard its beatings, and looked around alarmed, at her aunt, lest she might have discovered her secret. It seemed to say aloud: "You love that man. You love that man." She stopped short once, afraid or unable to go on, but looking up she met his eye, and was calmed and encouraged. It spoke command and comfort at once. It said: "You are here. I knew you would come. You did right," and—"you have come to me." There was the expression of

authority, of approval, mingled with his confidence and his satisfaction which a woman wants in a lover, and such a woman as Catalina even more than a weaker one. For a great woman especially seeks or needs a man who is her superior. If he is so, she has no shame in recognizing it. The feeling is like that of the highest nobility of Europe, who are proud to pay homage to a legitimate sovereign; and, not to speak profanely, it is not unlike the emotion a Christian has in submitting himself to Divine authority.

So Catalina at once became composed and brave under her master's eye and influence. She walked steadily now; she was happy, for she felt that he knew she was obeying him. She even dared respond to his glance, and looked steadily at him, as if to say, "I come, at your command."

But suddenly the condesa noticed him, and bowed with a little stare of surprise, and Aguero gave in return the sort of recognition that one bestows on friends in church. The condesa simply said: "That is my nephew, Juan de la Campa, whom I have not seen for years;" and wondering, mystified, a little anxious, Catalina fell on her knees by the side of her aunt, almost touching Aguero. He also knelt, but there was no interchange of looks, nothing indecorous, no attempt to speak or to touch her garments closer, though her robe had rustled against his sleeve, and her mantilla had almost caught his sword.

When they arose, the condesa at once stepped up to the bandit, and whispered: "When did you arrive? Why have you not been to see me? Come to the door, where we can talk;" and in a moment, Catalina was passing out of the cathedral in the wake of her aunt,

the most noted brigand and rebel in all Cuba leading the way. She had not penetrated the mystery, and was full of anxiety for her daring lover, showing himself thus conspicuously in the very heart of Havana.

At the door her aunt simply presented him as her nephew, and as he doffed his cap, Catalina trembled lest his features should be detected by some among the passers-by. But no one seemed to recognize him, and the conversation with her aunt went on. The interview to which the girl had looked so anxiously, on which so much depended, in which she was to learn and tell so much, was transferred to the condesa, and it was evident that Catalina could say no word on the subject of which her heart and brain alike were full.

"My dear Juan, when did you return?"

"Aunt," he said, "I got here only yesterday, by way of Cienfuegos. I stopped in the United States on my journey back from Spain, and at Cienfuegos I have been attending to my property. But I will pay my respects to you as soon as you permit."

"Well, come to-morrow—to-night I am engaged—and after vespers we will see the procession from my balconies. Then, too, you may make more acquaintance with my kinswoman here, the Doña Catalina de Casa-Nueva. You two are so great friends of Cuba that you ought to be allies, unless, indeed, Juan, your residence in Spain has changed your politics."

The old lady herself was a Cuban, and had married a Spanish grandee, but on his death, her property being in plantations, she returned to her native island, and, like every woman Cuban-born, her profoundest sympathies were with the cause in which her nephew and Catalina were so keenly interested.

"No, aunt, my politics will never change," he said, gravely, almost sternly. "I have not forgotten my brother." Then looking at Catalina with significance, "A brother's cause is a sacred one. My brother, señorita, was one of the students murdered by the Volunteers."

He escorted the ladies to their door, informing his aunt of the particulars of his stay in Spain, inquiring after different relatives whom he had not yet seen, and addressing himself only occasionally to Catalina, who for her part was still involved in doubt and ignorance. Was this really Carlos Agüero, the brigand chief, or was it Don Juan de la Campa, a connection of her aunt's? Had he been in Spain, or had she met him at her father's ingenio? The tones of his voice were Agüero's, rich and deep like those of many of the Cuban men; the lithe grace and manly proportions of his form she recognized. The charm of his smile, the mingled fascination and mastery of his glance, his grave, sweet bearing—hardly youthful, yet the gravity not that of middle age, but of character and intellect controlling the high spirit of youth—all these were Agüero's, all these she had seen and felt on that one day at the ingenio. But the conversation, the allusions, the statements, the inquiries, were those of another. She almost wished he might be gone so that she could ask her aunt for a solution of the problem. And yet in a moment she said to herself, "I wish him gone! What a pleasure to be near him, to watch him thus, even when his conversation is directed to another." She observed that no one seemed to know him, and he appeared to recognize no one, although he was a relative of one old Cuban family and a member of another; for the La

Campas were as well known as any of the Havanese aristocracy.

They arrived at the Casa Cordoba before she had found any clue to the mystery, and she looked at him reproachfully when he saluted them at the *zaguan*, as the entrance to a Cuban house is called. But her aunt did not ask him to enter, and La Campa, or Aguero, only promised to be prompt on the morrow. The condesa bade him an *adios*, and turned to ascend the staircase, and at this moment Aguero stooped and apparently picked up a card or note at Catalina's feet.

"Did you drop anything, señorita?" he asked.

"Thank you," she exclaimed, as she took a paper that he offered her; "it is something I prize very highly, and I wondered if it had been mislaid."

She laid it between the leaves of her missal, as if it had been a sacred relic; and indeed no relic had ever lain there more sacred to Catalina than this precious paper, which showed that Aguero had not neglected her, and which she believed would unravel the tangle of her thoughts. The brigand looked earnestly into her eyes, and said with deliberation:

"I am to have the honor to see you to-morrow, señorita, and my aunt says I shall make your acquaintance in reality then. That is an inducement indeed. I am happy to have given you what you wanted."

"Thank you again," she said; "it is very precious;" and bowing, for the Cuban women do not courtesy, and longing to offer the hand which she must yet withhold, she turned away.

Aguero waited at the entrance till the last rustle of her garments had passed over the staircase, and even her shadow had vanished along the corridor. He

should have been too profoundly filled with greater emotions, but nevertheless he noticed, as she ascended, that her foot, encased in a delicate slipper, was small and slender, and even more exquisitely shaped than that of many of her countrywomen.

Catalina hastened to her own apartment to open her missal. On the card there was only a line, evidently written at the cathedral: "I will be at the Casa Cordoba to-morrow. Here, it is impossible to converse." This left her in as much doubt as ever about the individuality or identity of her lover, and she went at once to her aunt. The old lady, however, could tell little more than Catalina had already discovered. Juan de la Campa was her nephew on her mother's side (the Casa-Nueva's were related by her father). He had been several years abroad, most of the time in Spain, and had returned to look after his estates, which lay in the neighbourhood of Cienfuegos. He was a fine, handsome fellow, as Catalina could see for herself; he was twenty-eight or thirty years of age, with a property that would be a good one if ever the country recovered its prosperity; he was well enough educated and accomplished, with some ability and more character, and a temper of his own; and that was all—except that he had never been the same person since the day when his student brother was shot by the Volunteers.

"He vowed revenge, and no one, even in our family, has ever hated the Spaniards more. If ever there should be another insurrection, Juan de la Campa is the man to lead it. And for my part," said the old lady, "I do not care how soon the attempt is made. Cuba can hardly be worse off than now."

Catalina at last began to construct the reality out of her

various discoveries. La Campa had evidently returned from Spain with revolutionary designs some months before, had kept himself aloof from Havana and his former friends, and believing the sort of brigandage in which he was engaged the only means to arouse the country, had entered on his career under an assumed name. This theory only could account for all that she had seen and heard, but this seemed to explain the mystery; and she waited for the morrow to learn the actual verity from Agüero's lips.

CHAPTER XL

GOOD-FRIDAY.

IN Havana on Good-Friday, after the crucifixion has been celebrated at the cathedral, the effigy of the dead Lord is born in state through the streets, on an elevated bier or catafalque, preceded and followed by an interesting and even stately procession, such as can be seen in no Catholic country outside of Spanish America. But in all this region there exists, as Catalina had said, an ancient as well as a foreign air, and more of it in Cuba than elsewhere, for Cuba alone remains a colony. Mexico and the South American states are emancipated from transatlantic influence, while Cuba is not only still Spanish, but old Spanish, very much what it was within the century when Columbus discovered and Velasquez conquered it. When to this old-world and old-time element is added the negro, the result is quaint and fantastic, and quite without a parallel. The blacks, the women at least, are very religious, and all have much of the barbaric remaining in their tastes and dress and habits; the climate keeps alive the original African temper and traits, and the look and demeanor of their servile condition still linger.

The Cuban population has thus a character of its own, differing from that of Southern Europe on the one hand and of the United States on the other. The prevalence of Catholicism, the innovations of barbarism,

the continuance of the mediæval customs, the traces of slavery—all are visible in their effects on the people and on the life, which in this tropical temperature must be, for the most part, out-of-doors. The houses themselves are constructed so as to be as much as possible in the open air—turned outside in, as it were. The huge doors and windows, occupying more than half the space of the walls; the gratings instead of glass, through which the interior occupations of all the lower and the middle class can be observed—for these generally live on the ground-floor; the open portals and inner court-yards of the grander mansions; the gardens on the roofs; the balconies, always occupied toward evening; the seats on the side-pavements at festivals and processions—all make one feel that he is himself a part of the community; that he shares their avocations and amusements. And after sundown, when all doors and windows are thrown open, and it can be seen that there is a female population existing in Cuba—when the domestic world is as curiously exposed as it is often concealed in the earlier hours of the day—the whole aspect is as unlike as possible to that of the most individualized cities of Europe, and in some respects stranger to an American than even those of Asia or Northern Africa.

The architecture contributes greatly to this effect. It is more tropical than that of Granada or Seville, and more elaborate than that of Tangiers or Tripoli; more oriental than Madrid, yet with a touch of the Gothic that cannot be traced in Constantinople or Cairo. The long street of the Cerro, with its colonnades of pink, and pale blue and straw-color, mixed with palms and plantains and banyans, and hedges of cactus in their scarlet bloom; the exquisite iron traceries of the bal-

conies and of the gratings at the windows and the doors; the exteriors of the houses tiled and decorated as elaborately as the great fireplaces in olden times, or in the best of the modern revivals; the open courts with fountains and oleanders, and orange-trees sending out their subtle odors; the zaguanes with carriages standing at the very centre of stately halls—all these make up a picture reminding one in some things of what we know of the life of ancient Greece, yet suggesting the Middle Ages and the Orient; with savages from Ethiopia and half-naked Chinamen working in the streets that were laid out by Indians; a cathedral of the time of Isabella, the Catholic, and an opera-house built by pirates, where the greatest musicians of the modern stage have been proud to perform.

On Good-Friday the older portions of Havana present a still more exceptional appearance, and more than ever resemble the scenery of a theatre. The people begin early to throng the streets where the procession is to pass. Chairs are ranged in rows along the narrow pavements; all the shops are open and filled with spectators; the upper stories, the balconies, and the windows, even the low, flat roofs are crowded with well-dressed people, most of the women without hats, and the men who have any pretensions to social importance all with the high black beaver of civilization. The Spanish flag hangs at half-mast over all the public buildings, and an hour before sundown the head of the procession appears.

Aguero came, of course, at the appointed time. There were other guests, for on these occasions the Cubans on the line of march throw open their houses to their friends, and in the company crowding into the windows

and the balconies Catalina and her lover were not particularly observed. Some of them knew La Campa, and greeted him cordially, but he had evidently been seen by none of them for several years, and his appearance was now different from that which they remembered. As evening approached, the bands were heard in the distance playing a funeral march, and the guests of the condesa hurried to the windows. In one corner of a balcony, under a jutting cornice that screened them from general observation, with an awning stretched overhead, La Campa placed a chair for the Doña Catalina, and stood beside her. It was their first opportunity for any real conversation since their parting at the ingenio. Separation, and the events that had crowded those few days, had revealed to them the reality of their feelings, and despite the keenness of their interest in the fate of Carlos—now that they were alone, although in a crowd—neither thought first of the prisoner. Catalina blushed at the proximity of him whom she recognized as a lover, and La Campa leaned down over her as if to point out something in the streets, and gazed long and earnestly into her eyes. At last he spoke, recalled to himself by the sight of the troops, which suggested the lad captured by men in the same hateful uniform.

“You do not think I have forgotten your brother, señorita? Have you seen him?”

She told him rapidly of her interview with Carlos, and of the hopes she had entertained of help from the American representative.

“There is little chance of aid from that quarter, at least from the men who are now in power in the United States. They are utterly indifferent to their country-

men in Cuba ; they allow all wrongs to be heaped on them ; they submit to all insults themselves. They are cold, calculating, weak. They may have some designs for benefiting themselves, but none for aiding an oppressed American, no matter where he was born or whither he wanders."

"Still," exclaimed Catalina, more anxious now than ever to liberate her brother without Don Ramon's aid—"still there is a chance, and every chance should be tried. But you, Don Juan—I suppose I must call you so—how can you venture here into the very jaws that are ready to devour you?"

"I am secure enough," he replied. "No one dreams that Juan de la Campa and the brigand Agnero are the same. No one in Havana but yourself and your father has ever seen the bandit chief. I have been long away, and my friends were not aware until now of my return."

She trembled, however, at the possibility of his discovery, and was about to urge him to be discreet, when he began again: "Let us talk of your brother. This American will set out for Washington next week, and if before that time nothing is done, we must take some steps to deliver Don Carlos. If he could by any chance evade the guard——"

Catalina hesitated no longer, but told him that Carlos had a friend, an officer of the Captain-General's staff, intimate with their family, who had promised to assist her ; that they were concocting a plan, and she eagerly asked the brigand how he, who was used to such enterprises, could play his part.

In the conversation she spoke of the visit to the country on Easter Monday. She had been invited,

with the condesa and her father, to accompany the party, and La Campa at once declared that he would ask his aunt to procure him an invitation.

"Oh, no ; I beg, I implore you," almost cried the girl. "You must not expose yourself to such a danger. To travel with the Captain-General's party would be too great a risk. If any soldier on the line should recognize you——"

He looked pleased at the evident anxiety, which told him all he wanted to know, and the gratification in his glance showed Catalina that her secret was betrayed.

"And do you then care so much ?" he said.

"I must care for the safety of a friend and for the chief of my cause," she replied, fluttering, and the color deepening in her cheeks.

"I am proud and happy in your anxiety ; but you need not fear. Half of those who surround me would strike for me if they knew it was Carlos Agüero they were ordered to arrest. I will go, and discuss this entire matter with yourself and with the aide-de-camp, your friend. On the way we can ascertain definitely what the American means to do ; and if, as I suspect, he is indifferent, then the officer and I must arrange our plans, for there may be no time to lose."

She felt again the overpowering sense of his mastery, and, unwilling as she was for him to expose himself, submitted to his decision.

"I must yield to the commands of the chief," she said ; and Agüero could not restrain the reply :

"I trust you will always yield to his wishes, señorita."

She did not look up, but played with her fan ; and

just then the procession came in sight beneath the balcony.

First appeared a regiment of Volunteers, in their blue checked uniforms, marching with slow and measured tread, as if at a funeral, their arms reversed, their heads bent reverently forward, and the band playing the "Dead March in Saul." After these came a congregation of colored men and women, all in black, the men in advance, with high hats which they carried in their hands, and the women all wearing the mantilla. These moved in two files, one on each side of the narrow street, close to the curb, with an interval of twelve or fourteen feet between them. A banner borne by a man with uncovered head, who was supported on either hand by girls in white, preceded the congregation, each member of which carried an unlighted candle. These were followed by a school of boys and young men, several hundred in number, in violet-colored gowns, bareheaded, and their hands crossed upon their breasts. Before them also a banner and various sacred emblems were carried. Next came more congregations, all marching like the first, in two columns, with the vacant space of the street between, all carrying unlighted candles, and in each instance the men preceding the women. Some of these congregations were creole, some negro, and some were composed of blacks and whites indiscriminately. In one or two colored communities the women were dressed in white. Then followed more schools and religious brotherhoods, and next a number of officers of the army, marching ten or twelve abreast, their heads bared and their swords drawn and held at a present. These were, perhaps, less reverent in their demeanor than their

humbler comrades in the ranks, or than any who had preceded them, talking and looking up at the ladies in the balconies as they passed.

After the officers followed several musicians, playing barbaric strains of a plaintive character on brazen instruments. Much of the music in the Spanish army retains its Moorish type ; the bugle-calls and the concerted pieces for morning and evening parade are of this character, and that selected on the present occasion was shrill and blatant, a sort of lament, not discordant, yet most unusual, mingled with an occasional clang of cymbals, that produced the effect of a wild, piercing scream interjected into a steady moan. As the players approached, conversation ceased all along the street ; the men everywhere uncovered, and all looked earnestly, if not solemnly, toward the catafalque as it approached with unsteady motion, borne on the shoulders of eight men, whose heads were concealed by a pall. The bearers kept a sort of step with the time of the music, but the whole paraphernalia trembled, and at every few paces the men were obliged to halt, as much to steady the structure as to rest themselves.

Upon a huge black-and-white pall was erected a sort of platform or bier, and on this a full-length figure of the Christ was laid, the crown of thorns upon his head, his wounds exposed, the prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and blood upon his brow and side ; as if the body had just been taken from the cross and was on its way to the sepulchre. Effigies of the Virgin, the Magdalen, and of Joseph of Arimathea, stood behind, in attitudes of grief, tottering as they were borne along. The figures were all of wax, and life-sized, and

by the time the procession reached the Casa Cordoba the sun had set, and the tropical night had begun. In the dim light any inadequacy in the representation was less perceptible, and to many of the women in the crowd the ceremony was solemn and affecting. The half-educated negroes were absorbed in the spectacle; and if to others the interest was that of curiosity or sight-seeing, their demeanor at least was becoming and deferential. There seemed to be an idea in the minds of many that, after all, there might be some reality beneath the rites, and there was no mockery or disrespect among the coarsest or roughest of the lookers-on. Indeed, these probably were the sincerest believers.

The darkness now increased, the candles were lighted, and the procession went slowly down the narrow street, the glimmering lights and unsteady pall passing out of sight in the distance to the strains of the Moorish fanfare.

After this there was an interval of some minutes, and then nearly all the troops on duty in the city, regular and Volunteer, paraded slowly by to funeral music. It was night before the last had passed, and many of the crowd had dispersed, some proceeding to the cathedral to witness the reception of the Body and the ceremony of the Entombment, and others returning to their homes.

All this while Catalina and Agüero remained in their nook in the balcony, undisturbed, for most of the guests of the condesa had established themselves to view the entire procession, and it would have inconvenienced the company had either withdrawn. The lovers, however, were not sorry to devote the precious hour to discussing the state of the country, the prospect of a general

rising, and, above all, the possibility of rescuing Carlos. The man, of course, laid down the scheme; he accepted Catalina's suggestions up to the point where Carlos should be able to effect an exit from his dungeon, and pronounced the device of carrying a disguise to him excellent, but was anxious to know that Arriete could be relied on.

"I am sure of him," the girl exclaimed; "he is my brother's dear friend, and," hesitating, "he would do much for me."

Her manner disturbed La Campa, and he imagined something of the truth, but did not feel that he had a right to suggest his fears.

"This is all-important," he continued. "If this man proves weak or false, your brother's fate is sealed."

"I am certain he will be neither; he is a man of honor; if he once commits himself to aid us, he is sure to keep his word, and he has promised me already."

"Already?" repeated the brigand, and he knit his brow and bit his lip as he thought: "The intimacy must be great indeed which allowed the plan to be so near development before I was consulted." He was not used to coming in late to the plans in which he bore a part.

"Well, be it so; we will suppose Carlos in disguise, and that your friend has left the gate unlocked. It is after nightfall. Now, does Carlos know the castle?"

"Perfectly. He has visited it often with Don Ramon, and learned all its outlines as well as its inner avenues. There is an immense ditch on the north-eastern face, where he could hide for a while, and later

scale the side, and then from the outer slope make his way to the shore."

"Very good; very good," said La Campa. "It is all arranged without any aid from me. Still," he added, with a touch of sharpness, "I can be of some use when your brother arrives at the shore."

Catalina looked up inquiringly, his tone was so peculiar; she divined the feeling that had prompted the remark. Then, indeed, she felt a pang at her own situation. If Aguero loved her enough to experience a touch of jealousy—if he was anxious to do all for Carlos—his love was real indeed. And yet, although he was here in disguise, and in danger for her brother's sake, she could not say to him: "I do not care for Ramon." She had forgotten, during this brief, happy hour, her pledge to Arriete, but La Campa's tones recalled it; and even the prospect of her brother's release was insufficient to allay the poignancy of her feeling. Loving one, she was bound to give herself to another, and that other loyal, noble, sacrificing himself for her sake; him she could not give what he deserved—her absolute heart. That belonged entirely to the man who could never know her real sentiment, or rather to whom she could never reveal it; for she was sure, at this instant, that Aguero knew her love as well as she did herself. The embarrassment was insupportable, but she could see no way out of it. She must save Carlos at the sacrifice of more than life.

There was a moment of silence, in which La Campa was immersed in a jealous anxiety, mingled with a strange confidence that, after all, this woman loved him; in that he could not be mistaken, his own instinct, her agitation, her uneven behavior betraying her in spite

of every effort of maidenly reserve, all made him certain of this. Yet neither could speak plainly. Catalina, especially, was unable to do anything to allay the suspicions that she saw arising in her lover's mind. In fact, was it not her duty to encourage them, and dispel as soon as possible the emotions she was sure he entertained? Their little moment of happiness was soon past.

"But you will be important," she continued, as if there had been no pause. "It is nothing for my brother to be liberated unless he can be instantly met. You will contrive the means for this, I know; and I will be more than grateful."

She looked up involuntarily, with more than gratitude in her eyes, and the noble fellow recognized her emotion, and was satisfied.

"I did her injustice in my thought," he said to himself. "Yes, señorita, I will do all, then. Your gratitude is not needed as a stimulant, but it will be an abundant reward. To be allowed to serve you as well as the dear boy is itself a reward. I will be in waiting myself; I will have a boat at hand, and in an hour he will be safe from Spanish tyrants. Your brother shall be saved. But I must see this officer and consult with him. Is he to be of the party on Monday? That would afford us an excellent opportunity to arrange our plans."

"I presume he could easily contrive to be appointed aide-de-camp-in-waiting for that day," said Catalina; and she bethought herself that the slightest intimation from her to the Captain-General or the marquesa would be sufficient. They would interpret her suggestion as an indication of interest in Don Ramon, and be more

than pleased that he should join them. She was not willing, however, to say this to La Campa, and indeed she dreaded the excursion, if both her lovers were to accompany her. But there seemed no way to avoid the embarrassment.

"And are you still determined to risk yourself with the party? I am really anxious for your safety. The chief should hardly incur so great a danger. What would become of the cause if you were injured or captured?"

She did not trust herself to further suggestions of worse happenings still. Her voice trembled as she talked of minor evils, and La Campa looked down lovingly, all his jealousy assuaged.

"Thank you," he said, in tones of exquisite tenderness, that made the simple words almost a declaration—"thank you, señorita, I will take good care of the chief, because you feel an interest in him. I will go to-morrow, and consult with your friend," for whom he now felt a sort of compassion as for a defeated rival. "We will arrange all. Perhaps the American Secretary may be man enough to take a decided part, after all; but if not, there are those in Cuba who will save Don Carlos," and he drew himself up proudly.

The girl looked up as proudly, and saw in him the incarnation of all her dreams—the chief of her race, the promised deliverer from the yoke of Spain.

CHAPTER XII.

EASTER SUNDAY AT THE PALACE.

ON Sunday evening there was high festival at the palace. The rooms were full, the company was gay, and the great mirrors with their gilded frames, the huge chandeliers crowded with light, the marble floors and tropical plants made a brilliant setting for the groups of elegant women, who were clad for the most part in light-colored garments, and the men, of whom more were in uniform to-night than usual. Catalina entered with the condesa, for her father was still unable to accompany her. Arriete and another aide-de-camp met them at the vestibule, and, each offering an arm, escorted them to the marquesa. Ramon found means to secure his mistress, and felt a thrill of passion as he held her white arm close, and thought that he yet might call it his own. He was radiant with hope and happiness and courage, and looked more manly than she had ever thought him before. Love and determination had developed him, and Catalina felt that if she had not known his rival she might in time have been won by a devotion so signal and so rare.

The marquesa made room for them in her estrada, and it was not long before the girl discovered that the brigand chief was actually in the official palace, in evening dress, conversing with the Captain-General. A tremor passed over her as she thought of his peril, and

yet she could not but be struck with the romantic daring of his course. He looked strikingly handsome, even in the garb of civilization, which till then she had never seen him wear. His whole figure was displayed in its fine proportions, and though the dress of society adds nothing to the comeliness of a well-made man, it does allow the form to be discovered; and the outline seen thus, owing nothing to adventitious aids of drapery or color, appeared to Catalina all the more to be admired. He was graceful and at ease, talking rather earnestly in a group of important people, and as they were not far off, she could perceive that he was telling them of his Spanish experiences, and after a while of his arrival at Cienfuegos. Arriete stood near, and looked at first as if he remembered the face; but the change of dress was itself a disguise, and the wary brigand was able to control his countenance and, tones so well that the aide-de-camp was completely deceived. Don Ramon was no match for the chief of a conspiracy.

"Did you hear anything of the brigand Aguero?" asked the Captain-General. "He is often in that neighborhood."

"Yes, indeed," replied La Campa, "the country is full of talk of him. But I was ready for him. My house is so situated that it cannot be approached unless the assailants are in full sight; and I had a good number of faithful men, ready for any emergency. But why is it, Excellency, that nothing can be done to arrest this fellow? How does he always contrive to elude the troops?"

"I am afraid," said the General, "it is because the country-people are in sympathy with him, and warn him

of the approach of the soldiers. And, indeed," he added, speaking lower, "it is said that the troops have not been unwilling to permit his escape when he might easily have been caught. I do not know; these may be mere stories, but there are persons high in place who it seems to me might have exercised more energy. The Governor of Santa Clara has been removed because he allowed Aguero to deceive him a week ago, and even to procure documents which the fellow showed as credentials to the Conde de Casa-Nueva."

All this Catalina heard through the hum of nearer conversation, in which indeed she actually took part; but her faculties were aroused by the keenness of her interest, and she caught every word that concerned her lover, even while she was apparently absorbed with the company that immediately surrounded her. But the marquesa now addressed her more particularly, and the group of gentlemen moved further off.

"You will be ready to-morrow, Catalina, at nine?"

"Yes, thank you, Marquesa; but my father will not be able to go. His health is still too feeble. He has not been well since my brother's misfortune. I shall be under the care of the condesa."

"I am sorry, indeed, that the conde cannot accompany us, and especially for the cause."

"I was not sure myself that I ought to go," said Catalina.

"But you need the change; and, besides, you will meet the American, and we must both see what we can do for Carlos. I think I shall speak to him myself," said the great-hearted woman. "And, Catalina, you must be more than agreeable. He is weak and vain, and I am sure can be approached through the senses.

But do not let him wean you from Arriete. My young cousin is very devoted. I shall have the General put him on duty to-morrow, and you can pit your admirers against each other."

Catalina did not look particularly delighted at the prospect, but she felt the force of what the marquesa said of Bainbridge. If he would interest himself for Carlos, she would be relieved of all her embarrassments. She would be under no obligations to the young Spaniard in that event. There would be no danger then for her brother nor for Arriete, nor for that other in whom her interest, she now admitted to herself, was keenest of all. "Yes, I must go," she said aloud, "and I will do what I can with the American. Oh! how much he might do, if he would, and how easily! Is it not terrible that a man should have such power and know so little how to use it, and care so little!"

"The ways of the Fates are unaccountable," replied the marquesa. "If power and place were reserved for those who are fit for them, there would be some strange upsettings in this world."

Just then there was a movement in the company, some of the younger ones rising for a waltz, and Bainbridge made his way to Catalina to inquire if she would join the dance. She declined the invitation, but walked with him toward the balcony. It was unoccupied, and they stepped out to overlook the plaza. The great fountain was playing, and a military band, now silent, was grouped beneath the windows. There was no moon, but the clear blue sky, not cold, though clear, sparkled with silver stars, and the brilliant sheen of a tropical night bathed every object with a radiance unfamiliar to the American. The architecture of the neighboring

buildings stood out distinct, yellow and pale blue, in the balmy evening; and the great masses of foliage in the square, the wide-leaved plantains, the thick banians, and the lofty palms; the colored uniforms of the soldiers, and the lighter garments of the lookers-on; the flashing waters that sparkled as they fell; and the twinkling torches of the musicians, waving amid the throng—made a picture that affected the young stranger. Bainbridge was becoming sympathetic. A week in the torrid zone had warmed his blood, and the murmur from the brilliant rooms behind them, the music, the movement of the dancers gliding by, the delicious Cuban atmosphere, all combined, with the presence of the beautiful woman by his side, to mellow the natural hardness of his nature, and he was quite a man. He repented of his harshness to Catalina, and thought that, after all, it might be advisable at any rate to encourage her to hope.

So he said, as they leaned over the balcony: "I am not sure, *señorita*, that I may not be able to accomplish something for your brother. I received to-day a communication from the Captain-General, reciting the circumstances of the capture, and as Don Carlos had evidently been with the brigands not more than half an hour, it may, perhaps, be shown that he was their prisoner. At any rate, there should be some proof of his connection with the band. I will forward the report to Washington, and shall have an answer in a day or two."

"Oh, thank you; thank you, indeed," exclaimed his companion, warmly. If you knew what a mountain you lift from my heart." ("After all," she thought, "Carlos can be saved without the sacrifice of me.") "I know your great government can accomplish everything that

it desires. And you, a member of it, must be able to make it look upon this matter as you will."

"I will try, be assured," he said; "it is worth while doing much to please you."

She disliked the words and the tone, but she was too anxious to resent them, and allowed him to talk in a strain of compliment that was most distasteful to her, but by which he fancied he was making himself acceptable. In fact, he flattered himself that he was gaining decided ground in her good graces, and he looked forward to the excursion to the plantation as the scene of a success he might well be proud of.

Her two other admirers also had their pleasant anticipations. Arriete had been told that he was to be in attendance on the morrow, and La Campa had procured the necessary invitation through his aunt, so that the three men were all looking forward to the day to be spent in Catalina's society. La Campa knew that the others were to be of the company, but he saw that his mistress was more than indifferent to the American, and his heart told him he need not fear Don Ramon. He had already divined that Catalina meant to avail herself of Arriete's regard to aid her schemes for her brother, but he had no suspicion that she had promised so high a reward. Had he guessed the truth he might not have been so composed, for he knew the girl well enough to be sure she would keep her word. But, happily, of the compact he was ignorant, and in his confidence he deemed it wiser not to thrust himself in public too much into Catalina's company. He paid his compliments for a few moments only, and was careful to betray no intimacy, simply saying, when the condesa could hear, "I am to have the very great pleasure

of meeting you to-morrow, señorita." The old lady thought him not over-gallant, and wondered at the caprice of man. "This nephew of mine was devoted on Friday. I could hardly tear him away, and now he allows the American and the aide-de-camp to monopolize the most magnificent woman in Havana. Perhaps, however," for she had her own memories—"perhaps he is cunning, and prefers a corner in a balcony for an hour to a public promenade at the palace before all the world. Who knows? I must watch these people who have been in Spain."

Ramon, meanwhile, had no idea whatever that Catalina was interested in another, and hoped by his devotion and untiring love to win all that he aspired to. The chivalrous but modest youth did not press himself upon the woman he adored, so that Bainbridge seemed that night to carry off the prize. He was vain enough to imagine that any woman whom he really wished to interest was certain not to prove indifferent; and although he was not really in love with this daughter of Cuba, he fancied that a flirtation in the orange groves might prove an agreeable amusement. If he had supposed he had rivals, he would have felt that the excitement of the contest would only give zest to the satisfaction of success; that is, his conceit was sufficient for the idea, if his little brain had been broad enough to conceive it. So all was arranged for the visit to the plantation on Monday.

Bainbridge went home glowing with excitement, and in the ardor of his unusual emotion, although it was late, he wrote a despatch to Washington, recommending a demand for the release of Carlos as an American citizen. He enclosed the letter to Fisher, to be forwarded

by the next steamer. In the morning, however, he thought better of the matter, and before starting for the excursion, despatched a message to say that the document was to be retained until his return from the interior. The two papers were sent to the consulate-general by different hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXCURSION TO THE INTERIOR.

THE company was at the station at the appointed hour. The car was a bare and ordinary one, clean but plain, with only hard cane seats; for Cuba has fewer conveniences than luxuries, and fewest of either in travel. The marquesa and the condesa sat together, Catalina with them, and Bainbridge, as the only stranger, was admitted to the group. The Captain-General, La Campa, and Don Ramon formed another knot, smoking despite the presence of the ladies, but in the furthest corner of the car. The other members of the party were the Segundo Cabo and his pretty wife, an important lawyer named Cabaña, with the ladies of his family, and two or three officials, all well-bred people of the Spanish party in politics.

They were travelling in the direction of Santa Clara, and after emerging from the suburbs of Havana, came speedily into a strip of open country, between bold hills on either side that were studded to the top with palms. The effect was peculiar, for these giants of the tropics do not grow close and thick like the trees of a Northern forest; each rises separate and branchless, without underbrush or ordinary foliage. No birds flutter in the lofty intervals, no animals wander on the sward below. The silent groves stand tenantless and undisturbed till a breeze touches the tufted summits and tosses the long

leaves so that they bend and bow gracefully to each other, like the stately Spanish masters of the soil.

At first there were few plantations, but soon they entered a region where the hills were lower and the wide savannas seemed intended by nature for the cultivation of the cane. Thousands of bright green acres stretched out on either hand, unbroken by a fence, sometimes to the horizon, the estates bounded only by avenues of palm. The ingenios with their tall chimneys vomiting smoke, and the group of trees and negro huts clustering around the master's mansion, made the only break in the landscape. Yet sometimes near the road you could discern a cabin half-hidden beneath the plaintains, whose great leaves, six feet long and twelve or fourteen inches wide, were screening the roof with a refreshing shade.

By and by a Cuban village came in sight, generally one long street of miserable, half-thatched hovels, floorless and windowless, with only huge apertures for doors. The dirty women and stark-naked children stood at the entrances to watch the passing train, and the men, in broad slouched hats and open shirts, were always at the station, whether the cars stopped or no. Every one seemed unoccupied, even at the points where business should have been transacted. But it was Easter Monday, which might, perhaps, account for the idleness.

Wherever the train halted crowds were gathered, black and white, selling and buying fruit or cooling drinks, the milk out of the green coco, or, more usually, sugared water; all the men and many of the women smoking long, thin, and wretched cigars. Often a volante, with its wheels as high as the hood, and the

postilion perched on the outside of shafts that were ten feet long, was waiting for some one of higher rank than the crowd—the master, perhaps, of a neighboring ingenio; and always half a dozen horsemen, in Mexican saddles on Cuban ponies, were lounging about—the overseers, or small farmers of the region. The inevitable *Guardia Civil*, or mounted police, were at every station, in their gray uniforms with scarlet collars and cuffs—supposed to patrol the country, but worth little or nothing in an emergency, as Agüero could testify—and at some points officers of the Volunteers came up to salute the Captain-General.

At the bodegas, or liquor shops, a rack for fodder stood in the open porch, and long rows of horses were feeding in the veranda; often, indeed, the mounted horsemen entered the building, and the animal munched by the side of the master on the earthen floor. Strings of mules were passing in the larger towns, hidden, as in Southern Italy and Spain, under masses of green fodder—stalks of Indian-corn cultivated for this purpose, and the only forage common in Cuba, even in costly stables. Everywhere the negroes were as numerous as the whites, and very little difference in dress, or manner, or condition could be discerned. Some fat, good-looking wenches, with huge brass ear-rings and bright bandanna turbans, had gowns as smart as any of the creole women, and attracted the finest of the men, laughing and talking with them on familiar terms. There was evidently no distinction on account of race, at least in favor of white women.

At one point there had been a cock-fight in the early morning, and the throng was larger and gayer than usual. Here the men were fine stalwart fellows; they

wore high boots and dangling spurs, elaborate shirts with embroidered and ruffled fronts, the garment short, and hanging entirely on the outside of the trousers. A gray, broad hat, a machete, a brace of pistols, a long gold chain, and a red cravat completed the attire. All were sober, for the Cubans, especially in the country, are seldom addicted to drink. They looked like a race with manly qualities, not over-inclined to work, perhaps, but who would, nevertheless, make good herds-men or negro drivers, and would fight rather than be enslaved. These were the men, galled by oppression, from whom Aguero's ranks were filled, and with whom, acquainted as they were with their native fastnesses and defiles, any Spanish army would find it difficult to deal. They have their faults like other men, but their good points as well. They protect their own women, and believe in them; they beget children like themselves; they would fight their own battles, if well led; and if Cuba belonged to them it could not be worse off than now.

After a while the scene was changed. The fields were now abandoned, the cane grew wild and uncared for, the ingenios were unoccupied, for the planters were too impoverished to plant. Large expanses, too, once devoted to cattle-raising, which before the war had formed an important element in the prosperity of the island, now were all deserted. The whole country, except at intervals, showed the miserable condition of the state—the poverty, the disorder, the neglect, the lack of means—results of the anxiety, depression, and desperation of all.

The ingenio they were to visit was called "*Espiritu Santo*"—"the Holy Ghost;" for all the estates in Cuba

bear sacred names, and wretched slaves not long ago were tortured on plantations called after the Blessed Trinity—“*Santissima Trinidad*”—or cried in vain for mercy to the very masters who named their property “*Misericordia y Caridad*”—“Pity and Charity.” At about eleven o’clock they reached a station decorated with flags, where the master of the ingenio, Don Julio de Loren, was waiting to greet the Captain-General. At this point a private railroad entered the estate, running directly to the ingenio, four or five miles away, for this was one of the largest plantations on the island. The host brought with him two dark-eyed, dark-skinned boys of ten or twelve, in white jackets and breeches, with scarlet stockings and cravats, and round straw hats with ribbons also of scarlet—evidently a gala dress for the occasion—two youngsters as handsome and high-spirited as could have been seen in any country in the world. They paid their respects with an easy grace which showed they were used to supposing themselves good company; that they had lived enough with their inferiors to give them a sense of their own consequence, and yet had mixed with their father’s friends and seen the manners of his world. They were little gentlemen.

Don Julio was a widower, a wealthy Venezuelan, and hardly a typical Cuban planter. A man of education as well as excellent sense and good ability, he had been able to accommodate himself even to the hardships of the planter’s situation at this epoch. Some of his slaves had been freed, while others refused their liberty, but they lived together at Espiritu Santo, separated only by a street, those no longer bondsmen working as diligently as the others. Loren spent most of his time at the

plantation, although he had a house in Havana. He raised good crops and received good prices, was liked by his people and was prosperous. He was of course an adherent of the government, or he would not have entertained the Captain-General.

The car was placed upon the private road, and went rushing into the ocean of cane, which on this part of the plantation had not yet been cut. Long stretches of palm were the only feature that varied the landscape, and the light green billows, tossing and gleaming in the sun, at last became monotonous. In the alleys that divide the fields, glimpses could be got of gangs of negroes at work; these were seen only here and there, for the custom is not to cut all the cane at once. It is planted in sections and at different times, so that one part becomes ripe and ready for grinding sooner than another, and a certain number of hands suffices for the whole. Easter had come very early this year, and neither grinding nor harvesting was over. Where there was no hoeing, men and women were cutting the cane, and others gathering it for the cars, for at Espiritu Santo temporary railroads were laid to any point desirable, and the cane was transported over these to the grinding-house.

At last they reached the mansion, overlooked as usual by the ingenio. There was a small paved garden in front, laid out with beds of brilliant flowers, well enough in their way, but not what might be produced in this luxuriant region by a skilful gardener with proper aid. There are, indeed, no gardens in Cuba worthy of the name, or of the island. Two or three magnificent banians stood at some little distance from the house, for the Cubans, like the Spaniards, dislike trees; not

because of the shade which they so much need, but they fancy the foliage attracts insects and creates an unhealthy dampness.

The house was long and low, like most of the dwellings of the planters, with a broad veranda on three sides. The first room entered was wide and ran directly through the house to the transverse dining-room beyond, which was so much exposed as to be almost out-of-doors. On each side of this principal sala were two tiers of bedrooms, to which the guests were shown, for the heat of a Cuban journey made a fresh toilet desirable. There was no passage-way between or beside these sleeping apartments, and no possibility of access to the further ones but through the nearer; and at night the Captain-General, whose chamber was at the extremity, was obliged to go to bed an hour before he was ready, because the ladies, through whose apartments he must pass, were fatigued and anxious to retire. Yet this was the establishment of one of the wealthiest planters in Cuba.

With all this primitive simplicity there was a sort of barbaric luxury. There were troops of servants, black and white; the table was lavishly furnished with silver, the dishes were rich, and if somewhat coarser than suits an alien taste, they were hospitably redundant. The guests went in and out with punctilious regard to rank, the courses were served, not as in London or New York, but evidently in accordance with a rigorous etiquette. It was high life in Cuba.

The breakfast lasted till after one o'clock, when all returned to the great sala at the centre of the mansion. It was too warm to venture even into the veranda; the immense blinds or curtains of reed on the outside were

drawn closely down to exclude the scorching glare of a Cuban noon, and the air was allowed to enter only from the sides or rear. Cards were brought, and huge salvers with coffee and cigars. The men all smoked, but none of the ladies, for not so many Cuban women of condition use cigaritas as Russians or Parisians, or, shall I say it?—my own countrywomen.

The party separated into groups, and La Campa at last, without attracting attention, was able to speak freely with Catalina. His aunt had rebuked him for his indifference, but he thought it wiser not to invite remark by any appearance of devotion, though it cost him not a little to stay away.

Catalina had been taken into breakfast by the American, whose ardor in behalf of Carlos had cooled since the evening before, and whenever the girl approached the theme in which he knew she was so much interested, the Secretary appeared indifferent or uncommunicative. Catalina felt the rebuff, and was greatly relieved when they rose from the table and he sauntered up to the marquesa, leaving room for La Campa at her side.

"Have you learned anything of consequence from the Señor Secretario?" inquired the brigand.

"Nothing. He has not broached the subject of my brother, and I am in despair."

"If he had anything to tell you, be sure he would have said it. He is not the man to lose an opportunity to magnify his own importance, if I can judge him."

"No, I feel that he has accomplished nothing; and that he means to do nothing. My instincts cannot deceive me. We shall have no aid from him."

"Then we must revert to our own resources, señorita. There is no other way. I have learned that the Volun-

teers demand that an example should be made of so prominent a person as your brother, and they are all the more determined because he is an American citizen. The Captain-General is your friend, but he is weak, and will surely yield in an emergency. We have no time to lose."

The girl was shocked at the nearness of the danger. "You do not think my brother in immediate peril?"

"I cannot say, but the lower Spaniards are a dreadful race. If their passions are once aroused, they are brutes indeed. I need not repeat the terrible examples we all know of, and which I have too much reason to recall. We must arrange our plans before we return to Havana."

"I think I had better make one last appeal to the Secretary. I have but little hope; still, some good may come from it."

"As you will, Doña Catalina, but do it soon, and if you fail—shall I speak to your friend Arriete, or will you prepare him?"

"Oh, I must speak to him myself," cried the affrighted girl, who knew not what might occur between the two men of the jealous Spanish race, if they attempted to discuss this subject before she had warned Arriete. Ramon might announce that he had a right to receive his instructions from herself; and if he should learn that the dreaded Aguero was here in their midst, he might think his soldierly honor involved. He had made no pledge to screen Aguero. It was Carlos, his friend, and Catalina's brother, whom he had agreed to save. He might even refuse to enter into a conspiracy with a brigand. Yet how could she explain all this to La Campa? "I must speak to Don Ramon first," she

repeated. "He is an officer of Spain; and though he is willing to aid Carlos, he may not wish to do more."

"And have you such influence with him, señorita, that you can prevail against the scruples of honor and allegiance? The effects of beauty are indeed unlimited."

The taunt struck home, and Catalina hardly knew how to parry it. "Don Ramon is my friend, and will do much for me, Señor La Campa," she exclaimed, giving him his more formal title, for she felt that he had not claimed a right to more detailed explanations, even had she been able or ready to afford them. "If you are unwilling to deal with him as a Spanish officer, you will deter him altogether from aiding my brother, and that, I think, you hardly intend," she added, with a touch of softness, relenting against her will, and resorting to entreaty in her tone, as the truest woman's weapon.

Aguero felt the force of all that she implied. "I am a wretch," he said to himself. "I have never told this lady that I desire to claim an especial right to serve her. Why should I presume to indicate a jealous feeling?" and his emotion burst forth at once. "I am wrong, utterly wrong," he said; "I have no right to know, or to ask, or to suggest the relations Don Ramon may have with the Señorita de Casa-Nueva; but at least I will not hesitate to declare those that I wish were mine. You cannot doubt. My eyes, my heart, my soul tells me, lady, that you know my feeling. I am not presuming on our acquaintance, our fellowship in patriotism, for you have assured me that you know my history. You know my family, you know my present position, and now—you know my passion, my hopes,

my fears. I am, Doña Catalina, your—," he hesitated for a moment, and then the words poured out in a torrent—"your servant, slave, adorer, worshipper, lover. I do not ask you for an answer," he continued, as he saw her confusion; "but I wish to tell you my own feeling, so that you may understand it. It is too soon for me to dare to hope that you will give a favorable reply; only know, remember, always, I am at your feet, at your service, at your bidding; and if I act strangely, or as you would not have me act, if I seem to presume—if I venture to indicate impatience or impetuosity, think only it is the overpowering passion that masters me and makes me do and say what I would not—and yet what after all must tell you—for it is, in spite of me, the truth. Do you understand these incoherent stammerings? Can you make out my meaning? Can you appreciate that when a great emotion comes over a man, whether he will or no, it compels his utterance? All I ask is, that you know I respect, I adore, I love you."

Catalina was stunned at first with the suddenness and the overwhelming fulness of his declaration; then came a flood of happiness, submerging every other thought or feeling. Agüero loved her; said so; said so with an impetuous rush of emotion that left no shadow of doubt of his anxious passion. This great, splendid man, this chief of the cause to which she had devoted herself for years, this heroic, dashing, handsome countryman was hers; was at her feet; was pouring out his words to pledge and hold her. Her whole face and bosom were suffused with a crimson she could not restrain; her eyes filled, her hands trembled, her heart again gave those tremendous throbs that seemed

to her as if they must declare her sentiments to all the world, they knocked so loud. But her voice was choked. That could not speak for her. She looked helplessly at the man who was bending over her, and when she tried to utter a word, no sound came. She gave him one glance, full of appreciation, that returned all, that thanked him, and yet appealed to him to spare her; and trembling so that she could scarcely support herself, she rose, offered him her hand, to show there was no anger in her heart, and stammering, "I am not well. Will you forgive me if I leave?" she hurried to her own apartment.

Fortunately no one observed her, and she reached the room alone. Here at once she burst into a convulsion of tears and sobs. At first she could not have told why she was weeping. It certainly was not from grief; it certainly was not unalloyed happiness. It was tremendous excitement. The shock had come sooner than she had expected—before she was prepared; but it was a shock of so rapturous a nature that the suddenness itself was lightened by the joy, and when she had time to collect her faculties, the sense of happiness was predominant again. "He is mine, and I am his." She repeated the words a score of times. "Yet why did I not answer him? How could I fail to thank him—to let him know that I appreciate and return his feeling? How could I allow him to doubt for an instant? But he does not doubt me, of that I am sure. He did not even ask me to confirm him, to assure him. Had he not been certain, could he have failed, with such love as his, to show his anxiety? He had no anxiety. He knows he has but to command."

But then came the thought of Ramon; and with the

thought the tears burst forth afresh—now not tears of happiness.

"How can I disentangle myself? How can I reward Agnero? How ever can I tell him the truth? He knows that Ramon is to do everything for me—that I can control him, induce him to violate his honor as a soldier—and I may not tell my master why. I must have a secret like this from the man who confides all to me, who has a right to all my secrets."

The torture of the conflicting emotions nearly distracted her. She could not destroy her brother; she could not save him by any other means. She must encourage Ramon, that good and noble youth, whom she did not love; she must repel the man who was doing as much as Ramon for Carlos and for her, to whom every fibre of her nature was subject, whom she loved with all the fervor of which she was capable, and yet she must not say so, but must let him and Ramon suppose that Ramon was the man that she preferred.

"I cannot, I cannot," she exclaimed. "Yet what shall I do?"

She flung herself on a couch in a whirlwind of passion, and sobbed till the paroxysm was past.

Her nature, however, was strong, her resolution stronger perhaps than her passions, and after a while she calmed herself, and tried to think. But there was no alternative. She must persist. She must rescue Carlos by Ramon's aid, and if Ramon saved him, Ramon must be her husband. And to do this she must conceal, if possible, her real emotion from Agnero. She would speak to him, would say that her fate was already settled, that she was pledged to another, and beg him never to address such words to her again. He was too

good and honorable to cease for this his efforts for her brother, and she would at least be able to work with him. She could be in his society, and share his efforts for the cause. Only—and here her emotion again nearly overcame her—she must deceive him, she must pain him, she must repel him whom she would have died to receive. She arose and bathed her face, arranged her dishevelled hair, and returned to the sala. Agüero was not there.

Don Ramon, however, was in the room, and at once approached her. She felt like a victim going to the stake, and nerved herself for the worst. The young man, conscious of the nobility of his intentions and of the magnitude of the sacrifice he was making for his mistress, came up full of hope and happiness and pride; but saw at once that she looked agitated, and asked if she had heard bad news.

"Yes," she exclaimed; "I hear that the Volunteers are already clamoring for my brother."

"But you need not be alarmed, Doña Catalina. My uncle can surely defer any action till we hear from the American Government; and I know that yesterday he sent a communication to the young Secretary which has not yet been answered."

"Ah, there is little hope from the Americans," she replied. "I have talked with the Secretary, who of course knows my anxiety, and he says nothing to allay it."

"Then, Doña Catalina, we have yet another resource, and that, with God's help, will not fail. I have promised you to visit Carlos and leave the key unturned at night-fall. You can easily take him a soldier's uniform in your basket, for no one but myself examines it. All we want is to be assured of friends to meet him after he eludes

the guard. I have have been thinking of it seriously," he said; "I can meet him and pass out with him when he leaves the cell. But we must know whom to trust afterward. There is La Campa yonder, whose brother was killed by the Volunteers, and who seems a friend of yours. Could you not persuade him to have a boat in waiting on the beach beyond the Morro? If Carlos could descend into the great ditch in the darkness, the ascent on the farther side is not impossible, and once beyond the walls, he might toward morning reach the shore. La Campa seems a good fellow. I have half a mind to ask him myself. Do you think it would be safe? I am risking all, Catalina," he said in a lower tone; "but it is not too much for you."

She gave him a hurried glance of recognition, and exclaimed:

"Don Juan might possibly be induced to aid us. He is a thorough Cuban, and, as you say, has personal reasons to be interested. But he has been long abroad, and the recollection of his brother's fate may have grown dull. Let me try first, and I will report to you. But oh, Don Ramon," she added piteously, "we must lose no time. Carlos is indeed in immediate danger."

"I am ready, dearest, whenever you call on me," and then, frightened at the word he had uttered, he blushed and was about to stammer an excuse, for Catalina looked flurried, if not displeased, when Bainbridge walked up and inquired whether the ladies would not sing.

Catalina turned an appealing glance to the marquesa, who was near, and the noble woman, always ready to oblige or serve a friend, at once arose and approached the piano-forte. She sang a peculiar Moorish melody,

half in talking, half in singing tones, like so many of the Spanish songs ; but not a playful piece, as those of this character generally are. It was the lament of a Moorish girl whose lover had been captured, and she was bewailing her ignorance of his fate. At times the plaint burst forth into a wild resonant strain, and then subsided into a moaning, crooning wail. At last it seemed as if the girl were crying herself to sleep, or that, losing her senses, she gave way to fate, and the murmur ceased.

The afternoon was sultry and the company were saddened by the song, for all of them knew the anxiety of Catalina, and all besides were concerned about the condition of the country. Life, it is true, goes on, even under circumstances like these, and what is called society exists ; for human beings need each other's company in moods of painful sort as well as gay. The salons of Paris were never more crowded than in the Reign of Terror, and in our own time many can remember the houses of importance in New York and Washington during the war, always filled with people of consequence and condition at the most exciting moments. The anxiety to be abroad, to know and to learn, to make or influence opinion, or the mere restlessness that the presence of great emergencies creates will account for this, without accusing those who compose what is called "the world" of a trivial or hardened sentiment.

When the sun was lower, Bainbridge went with his host and the Captain-General to the grinding-house, and the processes were explained to the stranger. They did not differ widely from those with which he was familiar in Louisiana, but he was too young to have

seen slavery at home, and he watched the negroes more closely than the machinery. The men and women wore little clothing, and worked together, as in the United States in the older time, mechanically, doing a fair day's labor, but without interest or energy. At one point they were bringing fagots of cane for the grinding. Some of the negro women were superb specimens of their race, types for Cleopatra, queens in chains. One, the American noticed, of magnificent form, with a bust that Juno might have envied, arms and legs worthy of antique sculpture. She wore a garment of some coarse stuff, that fitted closely about her waist, and a short petticoat clinging to her naked knees; bracelets and armlets of gilt or brass that glittered on her bronzed skin, and a necklace that reminded one of the Egyptian amulets of Castellani, though it was made of beads and glass. The creature walked with a stately gait and balanced her burden on her graceful head, sometimes raising an arm to steady the fagot, and looked up at her masters without a shade of shame at her slavery or her nakedness. One could not but wonder at the hidden emotions of this tropical slave, bearing herself with so much dignity, and showing in act and demeanor and glance and stride that she felt herself the equal of any of the lookers-on. Her history may have been as pitious as that of any Catalina of them all. Bainbridge was not a man of sentiment, but he was a Northerner, unused to seeing women of any race at work so rough; and this sumptuous negress, with the walk and figure of a Nubian queen, impressed even his dull imagination, and made him less susceptible to creole charms and creole woes. He said to himself: "The world is full of misery, and this great African suffers as much as the

Cuban lady. I was not born to set all things right." And in this at least he was correct.

After dinner the host proposed a novel entertainment. One of the trucks ordinarily used for transporting cane was carpeted, chairs were brought, and some sort of decoration of palm leaves arranged ; and on this vehicle, drawn by an engine, the guests were invited to make the tour of the plantation. The sun had nearly set, the heat was abated, and in the most delicious hours of the Cuban day the little excursion was more than promising. The ladies wore no bonnets, not even now the mantilla, the men stood or sat beside or behind them on the car, and the engine carried them rapidly around among the cane.

After a while they arrived at the limits of the plantation, and it was proposed to walk. There were two or three horses ready for those who preferred to ride, ponies for the boys, and a volante which the condesa occupied with another lady near her confinement ; but the marquesa, Catalina, and the remainder of the party walked.

The way was first along the public road, bordered for miles with palms, and under and beyond these always the mass of waving light green cane. But soon they turned into what had once been a *cafetal*, or coffee-plantation. Most of these are now deserted by their owners, the cultivation of coffee having been superseded by the cane, so vastly more remunerative. This one was like the rest ; it had been for years abandoned, and the house was no longer occupied. But the *cafetales* were always in appearance and charm far superior to the sugar ingenios, and this had been among the finest.

An avenue half a mile long and at least two hundred

feet across, led up to the house, the outlines marked by palms fifty or sixty feet apart, with an immense green sward stretching between; what had once been the carriage-way was now almost obliterated and overgrown. On each side of this avenue extended a row of flowering and fragrant shrubs, whose perfume the night air brought out and made more pungent. Behind these, thickets of plantain and orchards of orange intermingled, the golden fruit gleaming through the leaves like flakes from the yellow sky; for the sun was setting at the extremity of the avenue, and the heavens shone like a lake of burnished gold. The quick darkness that comes within the tropics had not yet fallen. The uninhabited mansion in the vista, illuminated by the descending splendors; the great lines of towering palms that looked like the columns of a ruined temple, and their feathery summits like broken architraves defined against the evening sky; the tangled wilderness of the lower groves, exhaling exquisite aroma; and around and above all an atmosphere and an influence soft at once and subtle, making the soul seem nearer to sense and the senses more a part of the soul than at other times—all conspired to produce a scene and a sensation that can be perceived nowhere on earth except within the tropics.

Bainbridge, even, felt the spell. If anything could provoke the dullest, coldest man into an emotion, it was this combination of atmosphere and evening, sunset and fragrance, and luxuriant vegetation and fascinating woman. He was walking by the side of Catalina, and asked her to take his arm. She declined, but stumbled a moment afterward, and as he attempted to assist her, the touch of her hand, the perfume of her

breath, the influence of the hour, all disturbed him. He lost control of himself, and exclaimed :

“How delicious to have this opportunity to tell you how profoundly I regard you, señorita !”

They were a few steps behind the others, so that he could not be overheard, and at first Catalina could not believe that his words had any significance ; but as they came within the shade of an overhanging plantain he continued :

“You cannot have failed to perceive how your presence affects me. You must be conscious of my interest in your society ! Will you let me hope that you are not indifferent ? Is it impossible for me to waken——”

But she withdrew from his side with a shock of surprise not unmingled with repulsion. Most women have a certain consciousness of conquest, or at least of ascendancy—a touch of pardonable exaltation when any man pays them the highest compliment he can offer to any woman—even if their hearts are absorbed in a regard for another ; but Catalina had fathomed her shallow companion, and was certain that he had no infatuation, hardly indeed a preference for her. She remembered that he had been indifferent to her anxiety and impassive to her pleadings for her brother, and this outburst she appreciated for exactly what it was worth. She knew she was not receiving a confession extorted from a passionate man in spite of himself, for that, even if she could not return, she would not have despised ; but to be addressed because he felt the influence of the climate and the hour, and even momentarily of her own charms, made her indignant, although his manner had been perfectly respectful, for Bainbridge had always the deportment of a gentleman. He

had, perhaps, presumed, but this Catalina could have pardoned, if he had been in earnest. She knew, however, that his sentiment was transient and unreal, and she resented the unreality.

"Mr. Secretary," she interrupted haughtily, "you forget. Young ladies in Cuba are not addressed in this manner without the sanction of their parents, and you have never been in the Conde de Casa-Nueva's house. You have never even met myself, except when we have conversed about my brother." She hoped by this to recall to him how little right he had given himself even to her gratitude.

"Your brother, indeed," he replied, catching at the word; "can I not interest you by my efforts in his behalf?"

But, though another had been able to extort from her almost an offering of herself, for her brother's sake, because that other was, she knew, sincere, this man's mention of Carlos seemed to her a mockery; for she felt that he suggested what he had neither desire nor intention to perform, and was attempting to trade upon her affections for the gratification of his momentary mood. The comparison of this ungenerous device with the chivalry of those who for her were endangering life and honor in the cause of Carlos, produced an absolute aversion for Bainbridge, and she replied, almost contemptuously, "Your interest in my brother, Mr. Secretary, I fear, is not sufficient to affect your action, or even your feeling, and certainly does not warrant this conversation."

He felt that he was rebuffed even more by her manner and glance and tone than by her language. Nevertheless, he made one more attempt to take her

hand, but she positively shuddered, and drew herself up with an air that left no doubt in his mind that he was disagreeable to her. She stepped rapidly up to the Segundo Cabo, who was near, and asked him for his arm, saying she was tired.

Bainbridge was mortified, but his wounds were seldom deep, and he picked himself up mentally, and approached the marquesa, who of course was ignorant of what had occurred. She was still anxious to secure the Secretary's efforts in behalf of Carlos, and spoke to him graciously :

"Are you enjoying this charming tropical scene, Mr. Secretary?"

"Yes, indeed, señora," he replied, panting from the haste he had made to leave the scene of his repulse, "I find to-night everything I had expected in Cuba. Even the charms of the fair sex are heightened in this atmosphere and under this sky." He could think of nothing more felicitous in his agitation than this insipid compliment.

"And do the noble qualities of the men also receive an enhancement?" inquired the marquesa, archly. "Are foreign secretaries more inclined to be generous and to make great efforts for their countrymen? Are they more susceptible to the influence of our sex when it asks favors such as I know the Doña Catalina has been requesting of you?"

"I told the señorita that I have referred the case of her brother to Washington," he replied dryly. But now, he thought, is my great opportunity. This is the hour for pacts and bargains. I must put on my international character and summon my profoundest craft. "There are some matters, marquesa," he con-

tinued, trying to assume an insinuating tone, "in which secretaries are concerned, which indeed can be best transacted here, in which their interest ripens under such a sky, and in which the influence of your sex may well be paramount."

"You speak in riddles, Mr. Secretary, I cannot understand."

"I must be plain, marquesa," continued the would-be negotiator. "There is a treaty now, or soon to be, under consideration at Madrid, by which it is proposed that certain privileges shall be conceded to Spain; these advantages will be important to the authorities of Cuba, will add to their incomes, but it will require delicate management in the United States to induce the government and the Senate to concur in authorizing them. We must also be assured that the views presented here will be accepted in Spain. You are supposed to have great influence, not only of course with the Captain-General, but with very high personages at home. Efforts such as must be made to bring about this treaty should not go unre——"

Here the marquesa raised her fan to interrupt the speaker. She had listened closely, for she desired to know how far he would go, and what were his designs. She had even allowed him to slacken his pace, conforming her own, till they were behind the entire party, as he had been with Catalina; but the Captain-General was not far away.

Now, however, she felt that it was time to interfere with the projects of this unripe Machiavelli. She did it with the ease and skill of a practised woman of the world, determined to stop at once a proceeding that she disliked, but willing to spare the feelings of her com-

panion, whom she rather pitied for his rawness than desired to punish for his presumption. She was, besides, anxious in no way to affront the government he might be said to represent, and with which he was certainly so intimately connected.

"Mr. Secretary, I do not think I can be of any use in matters of this sort. My sphere is a woman's, and these details of diplomacy are beyond me. I think you had better discuss them with the Captain-General."

"Ah, but I have no credentials, no authority to discuss them in that way," he stupidly went on. "I thought I might convey my ideas through a lady, and submit some views which would not compromise my government."

This rather angered the Castilian, and she raised her eyes haughtily as she said, "I must decline to be the interpreter of views which do not commit the United States. Indeed, if you would allow me to suggest, it would, perhaps, be wise to procure credentials and authority before proceeding further. At all events, Mr. Secretary, I must confine myself to my proper province. I am out of my depths in these profound waters where you great men are so at home."

He saw that she was rallying as well as repelling him, and was amazed at this reception of his views. He had supposed he had only to angle, and the fish would rise to the fly. He was confounded to discover that it was he who was pulled about from point to point, and following her lead; he began to fear that his footing was not firm, and that the game he had thought to land might precipitate him where he would stumble and flounder, and, perchance, completely fall.

"Marquesa," he stammered, "you do not comprehend

me. This that I wish you to do is in favor of your own country."

"I comprehend completely, Mr. Secretary; but we Spanish ladies do not bargain with foreign emissaries, I mean; excuse my English. We do not carry propositions from gentlemen without credentials; we do not serve our country without the sanction of the State; we are not political *intriguantes*." She moved off gradually while she was speaking, and made him a stately salutation, smiling in triumph just as she reached the Captain-General.

He was alarmed beyond expression lest she meant to continue the conversation, inviting her husband to join it, and betraying all that he supposed he had so skillfully conveyed; but the marquesa was merciful, and after enjoying his anxiety and confusion for a moment, she continued: "General, the Señor Secretario tells me—" his heart was in his throat as she maliciously delayed the conclusion of the sentence—then she went on: "he would like to see more of the cafetal. Can we enter the building? You like these mysterious by-paths, do you not, Mr. Secretary?"

They led the way, and Bainbridge followed. "What impracticable creatures women are," he thought to himself. "One never knows how to deal with them. Here is one wants her brother's safety, even his life; she knows I can do much to secure both, yet she is unwilling to afford me, in return, a little harmless amusement. Very well; she would not pay the price—she shall not purchase the ransom. He may rot in the Morro before the American Government shall intervene. She will wish she had not been so chary of her company, if he is shot for a brigand.

"Then there is this arrogant marquesa, who, everybody says, is a manceuvrer. Why should she rebuff me? I put my suggestions delicately, I am sure. Perhaps I ought to have approached an aide-de-camp, or a private secretary. These ridiculous scruples of etiquette! One woman would send me to a father, and another to an underling, and what I wish is to dispense with the men altogether. In such matters it is always better to deal with principals. I wonder if the marquesa was in earnest in repelling me? Could Fisher have been misinformed? If she should repeat that I have no credentials or authority, I may be unable to deal even with the Treasury. 'Tis all Fisher's fault; he should never have sent me to a woman. He ought to have known better, he that has lived here all his life! He is stupid as well as tricky. If he did not know so many of our secrets, I would discharge him."

Just then the Segundo Cabo approached, and asked if he would enter the mansion, which, by this time, had been opened. The building, however, was unfurnished, and presented little of interest; and under the stars and the clear blue sky they strolled back to the impromptu train, and returned to the ingenio. But Bainbridge paid more attention, on the way, to the other ladies of the party than to either the marquesa or the Doña Catalina.

CHAPTER XIV.

ESPIRITU SANTO IN THE EVENING.

DURING the evening Catalina found an opportunity to convey to the marquesa her conviction that all hope of receiving aid from the American was gone, and her friend concurred in the conclusion that help, if it came at all, must emanate from another source. But neither woman told her secret to the other. Catalina was silent from a native dignity that made her unwilling to betray the mortification of the man who had addressed her; and her reticence cost her nothing, for she had no pride in her conquest. She was, if anything, chagrined that she had failed to extort the slightest concession from her obdurate admirer; while the keen-witted Spaniard thought it might complicate great politics if she revealed the blunders of a foreign representative. She meant, of course, to inform her husband of all that had occurred, but would leave it for him to decide upon his course. So the Talleyrand of the State Department escaped, for the time, any exposure of his attempts at gallantry or diplomacy. Nevertheless, each woman knew, by that mysterious freemasonry by which the sex communicates without the use of words, that the other disliked and despised the foreigner more than ever, and that some fresh circumstance had contributed to augment the exasperation of her friend.

Bainbridge continued his devotions to the other ladies of the party, and although it was remarked that he no longer paid his attentions to those most conspicuous from position and personal attractions, it was thought that his unwillingness to undertake the cause of Carlos might account for his diminished ardor and for their reserve.

Catalina, however, had still another task. She must, if possible, induce her two real admirers to combine their efforts for her brother, without revealing to either the nature of her relations with the other. This would be no easy achievement, but the attempt must be made.

She was standing by the piano-forte with the marquesa. They had just sung the great duet for Aïda and Amneris from Verdi's masterpiece, and were receiving the congratulations of the listeners, when La Campa and Arriete both came up to pay their compliments.

"Yes," said Catalina, looking first at one and then at the other of her lovers, "the music is full of meaning, and the situation of passion, but in this opera it is the relations of Aïda with Rhadamés that interest me most. Can you conceive a greater glory for a woman than to induce her lover to aid the cause in which she is absorbed, even if it is not his own?"

Arriete looked at her keenly, and inquired: "Would the man be pardonable who betrayed his country, even for his mistress?"

"It was to save her and her kinsman," replied Catalina. "What say you, Don Juan; can nothing excuse a soldier who does a kindness to an enemy?"

"All depends on the circumstances, señorita. A man may be the soldier of a cause which he knows to be wrong, although his country is engaged in it. Then

disloyalty is not treason. Fate may have thrown him into a service from which his soul revolts. In all times those who succeed in rebellion become patriots."

"Pardon me, Don Juan," said Arriete, "but I think you wander from the theme. Rhadamés fought, for Aïda's sake, against his own country. He did not pretend to prefer the cause. It was because it was hers."

"He got what he wanted—her love in return," interrupted Catalina, and La Campa looked at her anxiously at the remark, which the girl regretted the moment it was made. "Let us talk it over," she said. "'Tis a curious question;" and the three moved to another part of the room, where Catalina continued: "Suppose a somewhat different case. Suppose a man desires to rescue a friend from immediate danger, even though that friend is in the ranks of the enemy; must the ties of allegiance or so-called military honor be more binding than the voice of friendship or affection? Surely a man may save a friend even from the power of the government which he serves."

"Most certainly," said La Campa, "when that friend has done no wrong, no harm to the country or the government the other serves——"

"My friends," interrupted Arriete, "I do not need to be persuaded. Don Juan, I perceive you know my situation. My mind is made up to save my friend and my friend's brother."

Again La Campa looked troubled; there was something too assured in Ramon's tone—something more than he liked to hear. Catalina flushed under his gaze, and Ramon, in his turn, became uneasy. The three were involved in a mystery—a mystery for two of them, at least, which the third might not unravel.

She bethought her, however, that this was the moment to complete the compact. Ramon had declared what he intended, and she was at liberty to proceed. She might, perhaps, distract them both from thoughts of her by reverting to her brother.

"You are indeed a friend, Don Ramon," she exclaimed; "and I am grateful. And Don Juan has also promised to aid us in our plan. Have you determined yet how it shall be, my other friend?" she added, hoping by this epithet to appease Aguero, whose face fairly blazed as he heard her address Arriete.

"Another!" he thought; "and she knows that what I want no other can share."

She looked at him appealingly, and continued: "Carlos depends on you."

But this had nearly betrayed the brigand, for Ramon, in his turn, was amazed, and exclaimed: "Then you know Don Carlos, señor? I thought you had just arrived from Spain."

"We knew each other in the United States," quickly replied Aguero, who being, as it were, attacked, at once stood on the alert, his attention diverted from every other thought or emotion by the appearance of danger. All the instincts of the fighter were now aroused; he forgot even love and jealousy in his anxiety to guard the secrets in which so many were concerned. His cause, his followers, he must protect at every hazard, at every sacrifice. And—still another transformation—he was chief, and Catalina, comrade now, both engaged against the Spaniard, both playing to conceal from Ramon the mystery of their fellowship. This was not difficult, for the struggle was unequal; the skilled confederates were more than a match for their simple competitor,

who suspected nothing of the conspiracy in which he was involved.

It was arranged that on a day during the coming week, to be agreed on after Carlos could be warned, Catalina should convey a soldier's uniform into his cell, and the same evening Ramon was to visit the lad, and when he departed leave the lock unfastened. At ten o'clock, when the soldiers would be in barracks, Ramon would return, and at a signal Carlos must come out to meet him. The two would then walk off together, for Ramon, as the General's aide-de-camp, could pass all guards. As the features of Carlos were unknown to the soldiers, the friends would doubtless be unmolested, and could move to the outer wall of the Morro, as if examining the ditch. Agüero was to have a boat at the shore north of the castle, far enough off not to attract attention from the walls. This they must all enter together, for Ramon could not return after the flight was discovered. The fact that he had last entered the cell would of course be known, and suspicion would light on him. He must accompany Agüero and Carlos, and remain in hiding for a while.

This was the brigand's plan, but Ramon thought it not certain that he would be suspected, at least of intentionally aiding the escape. He might be supposed to have left the key unturned by accident, and the influence of the Captain-General might save him. He felt, indeed, the fallacy of his arguments, but he was unwilling to accompany Carlos farther than the shore. The boy of course must rejoin the brigands; there would be no safety for him otherwise.

But Catalina could not consent that one who risked

so much for her should remain in danger, and pleaded with Ramon earnestly not to return to Havana.

"But how can I go to the brigands?" said he; "I, who am a Spanish officer?"

"You will be safe with them," interrupted Agüero; "you will have saved Don Carlos;" and then, with an impulse of unselfish generosity, he flung aside his concealment, and leaning across Catalina, who sat between them, whispered: "You will be protected, Señor Arriete; I can promise, for I know Agüero well."

"You know him, Don Juan," exclaimed the other; "how can that be, since you have but just returned from Spain?" A suspicion of the truth beamed on him. "This brigand," he continued, "has never been in Havana; he is a countryman of the interior. Have you any connection with the band?" and the instinct of the soldier awoke within him; he put his hand upon his sword.

Catalina saw the gesture, and understood it. It was now Agüero who was in danger. Her anxiety was intense, and she turned hurriedly from one to the other, not knowing what to say, nor how to prevent either from disclosing what the other should not know. Finally she exclaimed: "Don Ramon, I beg for my sake you will not insist on learning more. There is a secret in which not only Carlos, but I myself am involved. You promised me that my word in all this matter should be your law. I appeal to you to keep your pledge. For my sake, do as Señor La Campa asks. Will you not go with him and Carlos for a while? I am unwilling for you to return and be in danger because of what you have done for us—for me."

She knew no other way than to make this appeal,

which, though she was sure it would succeed with Ramon, must excite Agüero to the last degree.

Ramon was silent for a moment, and then replied: "I cannot recall my promise. I will do as you desire."

"Thank you, Don Ramon. I hope you will never regret it." And Ramon was satisfied and showed it, while Agüero glared at him in silence, till Arriete noticed his behavior, and instinctively felt the cause. He knew that he had a rival, or at least that the other loved Catalina. He could have no rival now.

To the girl it seemed as if every step she took only added to her entanglements. She had appeased one lover only to enrage the other, and that other was indignant because of what she had done solely to save him. She had persuaded Ramon to do exactly as Agüero asked, and Agüero was ready to tear him all to pieces for consenting. She had sacrificed the feelings of the man she loved, and mortified him in the presence of his rival, and this immediately after a burst of passion on Agüero's part that overwhelmed her whole soul, and which she had not repelled. She rose, hardly knowing what she did, but with one of those womanly instincts which in a man would be strokes of genius, she took Agüero's arm and asked him to lead her to the veranda; for she wanted air. Ramon could hardly feel slighted after what had just occurred, but yet it was not unnatural that he should experience a pang. No man in love can see the woman he loves in the company of another aspirant without that pang, however secure in reality he may be.

Catalina knew not, as she walked, what she would say, nor what she wanted to say, or do; but she hoped that this little act of preference and the touch of her

arm might calm the splendid fiend whom she wished to convert into a saint for a while. For Agüero was now all the brigand, aflame with jealousy and hate and rage; thinking that if this man were really preferred he should have been told before, as, indeed, he had a right to feel.

They entered the veranda, where the reed curtains were now all withdrawn, and the moon was rising late and full, her beams not striking under the narrow roof that sheltered them, but lighting all the alleys in the garden, and falling on the great banians farther off. They were alone, and walked to the extremity of the veranda, neither uttering a word. Finally, Catalina spoke: "Don Juan, I owe you an explanation of much that you do not understand. I could not tell you to-day, when you spoke to me so suddenly; I could not collect myself with so many around me; but——" here she hesitated; and he looked down at her, calmer now, but very anxiously, and her heart was in her throat as she thought, "I may lose him forever by what I say." At last she murmured: "I have promised Don Ramon, if he saved my brother—that he shall—name his own reward."

Agüero shivered violently, and then stood still; he was icy cold, and let fall the arm on which her own was resting. "I wish I had known this sooner, señorita," was his reply; "it would have saved me much mortification."

She could not tell from his tone whether it was pride or love that suffered most; and she dared not look up to meet his eye. To divert him, if possible, she exclaimed: "But you will not desert my brother because I cannot thank you as I ought for what you have said

to-day." She was about to utter more acknowledgments, but he interrupted her: "No thanks are necessary, señorita; nor will Carlos Agüero desert his friend or follower because of the act of any woman. I will do my part in all the plan, be sure, as earnestly as if I were to be rewarded. You will see what it is to be a Cuban chieftain. Shall we return inside? Our absence may be observed."

She longed to say more; to soothe his galled spirit, to tell of her own suffering at the anguish she was causing him, to assure him that her misery was equal to his own, but he suffered no emotion to be visible in his countenance; his tones were calm though concentrated, and cold; he offered his arm with that air of authority which until now had seemed to her to have such a charm, and which was still irresistible, but now was converted into a yoke. He meant to put a gulf between them at once, and he succeeded. She did not dare persuade; she did not dare suggest that they should remain. She simply said, "I obey my chief." But even this did not move him. His arm did not tremble when she laid her hand upon it, and he led her into the sala with as little emotion, that she could discover, as if she had been the condesa. Catalina had done her work. She had secured Ramon. Agüero was to aid them. Her brother would probably be saved; and she was the most miserable woman in Cuba.

The next day the party returned to Havana. The only one of those with whom we are concerned who was satisfied with the visit was Arriete. Catalina and Agüero had their own great trouble; Bainbridge was mortified and disappointed; the marquesa had told her husband of the overtures of the foreigner,

and the Captain-General, a high-strung, haughty man, was indignant at these indirect approaches to his wife, and yet unwilling to resent the matter publicly, both for her sake and because he knew not how it might affect the negotiations at Madrid. The condesa's day for anxiety on any subject beyond her health and her personal comfort and her manners was nearly past; she was the most impassive person of the group. If the other members of the party had their own drama playing all the while—as may very well have been—the action was not visible to any of the principal characters of this story, absorbed as they were in their own parts.

They separated at the station, Catalina and the marquesa with an embrace, and the Captain-General saying kindly, almost tenderly, for he had a heart: "Adios, my child. Do not despond. All may yet be well."

Bainbridge made his bow with constraint, and it was civilly but coldly returned.

"You leave us soon, Mr. Secretary, I understand?" said the General.

"Yes; I shall probably sail this week."

"Can I do anything to facilitate your departure? I will send you a special passport."

"Thank you, Excellency."

They did not ask him to call to take his leave, nor did he suggest the ceremony. He thought that under the circumstances it might perhaps be better to send his cards.

Arriete was in attendance, so that he went off in the carriage with their Excellencies, after bidding Catalina good-bye, and promising to call the same afternoon to escort her, as usual, to the Morro. Agüero, meanwhile, stood watching them, without any appearance of con-

cern, but Catalina knew that he saw every gesture and glance, and noted every syllable and tone. She was gratified that he did not seem altogether indifferent. She gave her hand to Ramon without any especial significance, and could not for her life return the pressure of his own, though she felt that he was entitled to the favor.

Then came the bandit, who showed his aunt and Catalina to their carriage with punctilious deference.

"How formal you are all of a sudden, Juan!" said the old lady. "Do you want to drive home with us and dissipate that cloud? What is it? Has Ramon been more successful than you with Catalina?"

"Thank you, Countess-Aunt. I have an engagement for the morning. I will come later and inquire for your health."

"But you will not see Catalina. She returns to her father to-day."

"I regret, Condesa, but my engagement is imperative, and you will let me know when the señorita is again at your house, so that I may call."

"Oh, as you will. The man that does not know where good fortune lies when it is absolutely in his path does not deserve to enjoy it." Then turning to the coachman: "To the Casa del Conde, Manuel."

Agüero bowed, and all the way to the house of her niece the old lady wondered what was the matter with Juan de La Campa, but Catalina could not or would not inform her.

CHAPTER XV.

MACHINATIONS.

DURING the absence of Bainbridge, Fisher had been making mischief. He had been stung by the sneers of his superior, and the recollection rankled in his malicious soul. He firmly believed, besides, that he had more ability than the supercilious Secretary, and that only the accident of fortune had made him the subordinate; so he turned over in his mind for many days the problem and the means of his revenge. When the despatch that Bainbridge had written in favor of Carlos arrived he perceived his opportunity. He knew from Go-Bright the relations of the young Secretary with the President's wife, for the story was familiar to the gossip of Washington, and had reached even the clerks in the departments. Go-Bright, in order to impress Fisher with the importance of the affairs to which he was necessarily admitted, had informed him that the first lady in the country had once been interested in the new diplomatist, and was believed not to have forgotten her former preference; and Fisher now bethought him that he might arouse that lady's suspicions and induce her to believe that she had a rival in Catalina.

Accordingly, he concocted a letter to Adelaide, which he caused to be copied in a feminine hand. It read as follows:

"MADAM :

"Although a stranger to you, yet, as an American woman long resident in Cuba, I feel that I may appeal to a countrywoman so highly placed as to be able to interpose in behalf of threatened American interests. I am extremely averse to the mention of individuals, and to the revelation of personal indiscretions; but when grave national concerns are affected all pettiness disappears, and I trust that the elevation of my motives will be recognized.

"The American Assistant Secretary now in Cuba is supposed to have visited Havana in order to facilitate important national objects, but these very objects are hazarded by the unfortunate susceptibility he displays to the charms of a most attractive but most designing Cuban. This lady is uncommonly beautiful, of high family, but entirely in sympathy with the rebellious party in politics, and therefore, of course, opposed to the Spanish Government. Her whole soul is in this opposition, and her whole life is devoted to the cause of brigands and rebels. Her brother has even been captured in arms against the government, and is now imprisoned for his crimes, having been connected with a noted brigand, one Carlos Agüero, the same who was recently imprisoned by the United States authorities but afterward escaped.

"This siren has set her snares for the American Secretary, and completely beguiled him. She even visits him in his private office at the consulate, an offence against propriety still more glaring in Cuba than in Washington. The pair are at this very moment making part of an excursion to the interior of the island, and the intimacy has occasioned talk, not to say scandal, in the highest circles of society. Calypso has finally set herself to prove her power by procuring the liberation of her brigand brother, who calls himself an American, and she openly asserts that an application in his behalf has been sent by the Secretary to his government. Indeed, the enchantress has boasted of her success in advance, and even designated the day when her brother will be released. I leave it to you, madam, to perceive the importance of thwarting the designs of this insidious beauty, and to take measures to secure that tropical fascinations do not succeed in overturning grave governmental schemes.

"The bandit in whose behalf these efforts are made is Don Car-

los de Casa-Nueva; his sister, the foreign charmer to whom the American diplomatist has succumbed, is called the Doña Catalina.

"With great admiration for the qualities which fit you so eminently for your exalted place, and in full confidence that you will now exert those qualities to save your country and your countryman from utter subservience to foreign and female wiles,

"I am, madam,

"Your obedient servant,

"CASSANDRA."

By the same steamer that carried this letter the clerk forwarded Bainbridge's despatch in behalf of Carlos, determining to report that the second note which directed him to withhold the document had not been received until after the steamer had sailed.

Adelaide duly received the letter of Cassandra, and although she was ashamed to acknowledge its influence, the sorcery worked, and after some little resistance she submitted to the spell, and determined to ascertain whether Bainbridge had made an application in behalf of Carlos. She was unwilling to broach the subject to the President, but that evening she sat next Mr. Littleton at dinner, and naturally inquired about Bainbridge.

"What do you hear from our new envoy at Havana, Mr. Secretary?"

"Bainbridge is enjoying himself vastly in Cuba," said his father. "He has dined at the palace, and on Monday of this week he makes one of a party to visit a plantation in the interior."

Adelaide shivered involuntarily, but controlled herself. Cassandra was right.

"The excursion will interest him, I suppose?"

"Yes; he expects great pleasure from the trip."

"What does he say about the condition of the island? Is it so disturbed as we have heard?"

"There seems a great deal of dissatisfaction, indeed even violence and brigandage. One of his despatches received to-day mentions a young American who has become involved, and been thrown into the Morro. Bainbridge thinks we ought to protect him."

She was fairly ablaze now with jealousy.

"Why should an American be involved in a Cuban conspiracy?"

"I do not see, myself; but Bainbridge seems uncommonly anxious about him."

"What is the young man's name? Is he well known?"

"I hardly recollect. Casa-Bella or Casa-Nueva; I cannot remember which."

"Those are not American names."

"No; Bainbridge says he is the son of an American mother who married a Spanish nobleman. He was educated in this country, and became an American citizen."

"Why does he not stay here then? I don't think much of American citizens who go to other countries and plot against foreign governments. What has this fellow done?"

"He is a brigand."

"Not even a revolutionist. I really wonder at the interest your son takes in such a case. When will he return?"

"I cannot tell. The attractions of the Cuban beauties seem to detain him."

"Ah, now you interest me. Does he say much about them?"

"Yes, indeed; he declares that their beauty and their behavior are both irresistible. And now I think

of it, he mentioned in one of his earlier letters a lady of the same name with this brigand, and said she was one of the most enchanting creatures he had ever met. I declare, I believe he has been beguiled by her into asking for the release of this highwayman. I never should have recollected the name but for your inquiry. Women always penetrate to the core of things. Bainbridge is very susceptible, at least *for a while*, you know."

He was not unwilling to inflict a wound, to punish her for having jilted Bainbridge.

She felt the sting, and hated both men for the moment—the father for the taunt, and the son because he had allowed her image to be disturbed by that of this unknown creole. She could endure to be forgotten, but not replaced, even though the fault was her own.

"Well," she said, significantly, "don't let his fancies for our sex interfere with grave international obligations. It is all very well for him to amuse himself, but that is no reason why we should interfere in behalf of public criminals."

The Secretary was struck by her tone and manner as much as by her words. He saw that she was in earnest, and he was a place-man. Having accepted his post, he was unwilling to be disturbed in it; and he knew the immense weight of Adelaide's influence. She had overthrown more than one Cabinet minister, and was becoming imperious. Littleton was very certain that if she determined on his downfall, his stay in the government would be short. He perceived her jealousy and he knew her vindictiveness. Her eyes glared, her breath was short, her bosom rose and fell with a passion that was not tender. He trembled for himself and his son,

and bowed to the President's wife with peculiar suavity, for he felt that he had touched the tigress too hard.

"Do not be afraid, madam; the State Department will never be influenced by personal considerations while I am at its head. No brigand will be protected by me because of the love affairs of his relatives."

Adelaide beamed graciously upon him again, and then laughed merrily.

"You take me very much in earnest, Mr. Secretary, and speak as if I were the head of the State. It is not for a woman to interfere in such matters. But when one of our sex is concerned, our penetration is sharpened; so my suggestions may be worth considering, even if you conclude not to act upon them. I hope we shall see Mr. Bainbridge back very soon."

No action was taken in behalf of the American citizen confined in the Morro.

Bainbridge himself, however, was cured, and when Fisher apologized for the mistake he had made in sending the despatch, the Secretary replied: "It matters little. I shall be back in time, and will take care there is no interposition in behalf of this would-be American." He was almost inclined to intimate as much to the Cuban authorities before he sailed. With Adelaide and Bainbridge both for enemies, poor Carlos had little chance.

CHAPTER XVI

DIPLOMACY IN CUBA.

BAINBRIDGE had driven direct from the railroad station to the consulate-general, to consult with his confederate, for since the experiment with the marquesa had failed, it was necessary to proceed with their other schemes. Fisher was accordingly informed of the situation, and directed to arrange at once an interview with the officials of the Treasury.

"We have lost a week already," said the Secretary, "because of your suggestion that I should approach a woman in such a matter; and now, not only is the time gone by, but we have a vigilant enemy to oppose, for she will undoubtedly do everything in her power to frustrate our plans."

"But she will not learn them," answered the subordinate. "The people of the Treasury know their business far too well to confide their projects to an enemy, and I have told you they are hostile to the palace. Within the last few days the chief of the Treasury has openly defied the Captain-General; he is believed to have great influence at Madrid, and it is whispered that the General must resign. At any rate, it is open war, and there is no danger that any of our designs will be disclosed to the marquesa or her husband."

"Well, we must get to work. Let the officials know that I want an interview immediately, and for what pur-

pose. I suppose they already have some inkling of the matter in hand."

"Oh yes," said Fisher, "I have prepared them. Half a day's notice will be all they need. I can promise you an interview to-morrow. Where shall it be, here or at the Treasury?"

"Which do you say? Where will it attract least notice?"

"I think it had better be at the Treasury. It would not be unnatural for a stranger of importance to be shown the building, and the men you want to see could easily be collected there without exciting comment, whereas it would certainly be known if they were to visit you."

"Very well. Only see that the meeting takes place soon. I must return to Washington within a week, or Ernest will be here in my way. Go-Bright telegraphs that he cannot detain him longer. That confounded Holy Week has upset all my calculations. And one word more; don't bring too many Spaniards. We don't want a crowd of confidants; two will be plenty."

"I will take care, Mr. Secretary."

On Wednesday morning, accordingly, the negotiations, which the representatives of neither government knew anything about, proceeded between the United States and Spain. In a private room of the Treasury, Bainbridge, with Fisher for interpreter, in a double sense was closeted with Don Luis de Palma and Don Pablo Delgado, two important officials of the Treasury, or Hacienda, as it is called, of Havana. These were, by the rules and regulations, written and unwritten, of Cuban politics, the personages most directly interested in the receipts of customs and taxes, and invested in

reality with the most potent authority in all financial matters. They had, indeed, superiors whose nominal sanction was necessary for the validity of their acts, and who were supposed to share more than equally in the profits of their transactions; but they were the actual powers behind the throne, the workmen who pulled the strings that set the puppets dallying. They allowed their masters the shows of power, and graciously doled out to them the gains which they deemed should appease their greed; but they themselves were universally credited with the real direction of the affairs in which they appeared, and, if report was true, they never went away from any affair empty-handed.

For the corruption existing under the Cuban Government is probably unrivalled to-day in civilized society; and that corruption, which extends to every ramification of official life, comes to a head and focus in the Treasury. Here is the field for fraud, oppression, and bribery. The regulations themselves are contrived so as to be almost impossible to fulfil; they are onerous and oppressive in every particular, and the slightest infraction or omission is visited by an exorbitant fine. Fines, indeed, are constantly laid so intolerable and preposterous that it is manifest no one expects them to be paid, and in default goods and vessels, crops and lands, are embargoed and sold.

These governmental exactions are bad enough, but the manner in which they are carried out is infinitely worse. The officials, having pushed the victim to the verge of endurance, intimate to him that upon payment of half, or even a smaller portion, the claim will not be urged, or even that a remission will be procured; and, as a rule, the sufferer submits, and relieves himself from the

danger of losing more, by paying half of the inequitable demand. Worse even than this, the subordinates of the government constantly make false accusations, prefer charges without the shadow of foundation, assert facts that never occurred, invent regulations that never existed, revive others long since repealed; and on the strength of these iniquitous preliminaries, report the alleged offenders to their superiors, and orders are peremptorily issued for a penalty. If appeal is made, delays are great, and business is ruined meanwhile; despatch can only be procured by favor, and favor by a bribe. The same is true when the question is one of absolute relief, or pardon for an alleged but imaginary crime; money must be paid at every step. Every petty official makes his requisition unknown to the law, and follows it up with all the terrors that the law provides for real offenders; and, finally, the innocent sufferer, badgered, tortured, tired out, depleted, yields, and pays whatever is demanded; but probably obtains only suspension or partial immunity, in the end.

All this is of constant occurrence, not only with Spaniards and Cubans, but with Americans as well. There are three thousand American citizens registered in Havana alone, and the records of the consulate-general are full of evidence of cases like those described, hardly one remedied or atoned for. These have been regularly and faithfully reported to the State Department, which, as a rule, in the beginning, takes them up, and directs the consular officer to make complaint to the Cuban authorities. The consul obeys, and the authorities promise to investigate, but do nothing of the sort. The screws instead are put to the victim again, to teach the impropriety and inefficacy of remonstrance or

resistance. Then more complaints and more appeals, and more instructions and more promises. This usually goes on for about a year, at the end of which the Captain-General notifies the consul that the authorities report to him that the demand is just, and must be paid. And it is paid, and the State Department, knowing and admitting the injustice, nevertheless acquiesces, and compliments the Spanish Minister.

At the time of which we are writing, however, the authorities at Madrid had become convinced that a large portion of the revenues which the laws intended for the support of the government were diverted to the coffers of its subordinates. The officials themselves betrayed the government daily. The taxes, especially the import and export dues, were so enormous that smuggling was universal, and countenanced particularly by those appointed to prevent it. It has been repeatedly stated that not half the legitimate customs were received by the Treasury. There was a deficit annually of millions. No trustworthy or sufficient statistics could be procured even by the authorities themselves, to enable them to detect the offenders, and the Government at Madrid had come to the conclusion that something must be done to elicit the facts and prevent the perpetration of further frauds. Its own revenues must be collected by its own collectors.

It was with a view to accomplishing something in this direction that the Cuban officials had agreed to confer with Bainbridge. When Fisher originally intimated to them that his superior was coming to Cuba, and that there might be an opportunity of reaching terms agreeable to all, they could not at first perceive any means by which the American could as-

sist in their operations or enhance their emoluments. The tens of thousands of officials in Cuba are all Spaniards; they visit the island for a year or two, and expect to make their fortunes in that period. Horde after horde of hungry Goths sweep over the unhappy island, like clouds of locusts, devouring the entire harvest every season. These Spaniards know the antipathy the Cubans cherish for them, and the anxiety of the Cubans for aid from the United States. They are jealous of the United States; they fear us, they detest us. They know that Cuba must, in the end, fall to us, if ever we desire it, and that they cannot hold the island a day against our will. They therefore place the highest taxes on American property, the highest customs on American trade, the heaviest wrongs on American citizens; and they have no wish for better terms with the United States. A cordial understanding with us would interfere with their sway, would lessen their incomes, legitimate and illegitimate, and hasten the day of Cuba's deliverance. At least, so the subordinates believed.

So at first they listened languidly to Fisher's suggestions. If their gains could not be increased by any arrangement with the United States, why make any arrangement? But after considering the subject for a while, and finding the clerk so anxious for an accommodation—thinking, too, that the presence even of a subordinate member of the American Government on such an errand must have significance—they revoked their original decision, and concluded that the United States could be employed to assist in collecting the Spanish revenues. Spanish consuls in the United States, it is true, already levied an export tax on the vessels and cargoes leaving American ports for Cuba; but the

American authorities themselves might be induced to report to those consuls the amount and character of the goods exported the other way, so that the proper tax could be collected in Cuba. For, as has been seen, the customs authorities were utterly unable to collect those taxes themselves, or even to discover of what amount their own officers and their own citizens defrauded them. But the export tax was in reality paid by the American consumer ; it was laid on that article of prime necessity—sugar ; and that other, hardly to be called a luxury—tobacco ; the principal, almost the exclusive importations to us from the island. Now, if the American custom-houses could be made to report to the Spanish consuls the exact amount of those articles arriving from Cuba in the United States, the tax that bore so heavily on Americans could be collected with greater facility and rigor in Cuba. The device was worthy of the countrymen of Gil Blas, for cunning, greed, and impudent audacity. It was the especial proposition that the officers of the Treasury had prepared for the American Secretary. There were others, but this was the one in which they were personally and particularly interested.

But how to induce him to accept it was the problem. Our Spaniards, however, were astute negotiators ; skilled in all the crooked arts, knowing how to magnify their own concessions and depreciate the importance of any they might receive ; adroit in compliment, profuse in the language of protestation, able always to conceal their real intentions, and to invent a phrase susceptible of a double meaning. They trusted to the genius of their race, which never deserted them in such emergencies. They saw, too, that for some reason the Americans appeared anxious to strike a bar-

gain, and this emboldened the wily functionaries. There must be something to be gained. When the customer is eager to buy, the cunning shopman can always advance his price.

They came to the interview—men of years and experience in affairs, used all their lives to circumventing governments and outwitting opponents; full of plots and devices and craft; certain of their own purposes, and not ignorant of those of their antagonist. They found to contend with them a raw youth, never engaged in important business until now, ignorant of the profession he had entered some months before, untrained in diplomacy or international law, but naturally self-sufficient and puffed up with a sense of his own consequence; thinking he had a great and secret design, and determined to accomplish it at every cost—exactly the material to be worked upon by their wiles; patent to their keen vision, pliable to their manipulating skill. His associate was the clerk, whose only idea was to push himself into importance by connection with his superior, and to entangle that superior in some transaction by which he could secure a hold on him, and be certain of protection and promotion in the future; a supple tool for the highest bidder, but determined to receive his wage.

After many mutual bows and elaborate salutations the three worthies seated themselves around a table covered with statistics and stationery. There was also a Spanish and English dictionary for the use of Fisher, who sat a little behind. Now they were ready for projects and protocols. "Now for my Treaty," thought Bainbridge; "Genius of Invention and Statecraft, come to my aid!"

Don Luis de Palma was the superior Spaniard in rank, and took the lead in the conversation. He was the younger of the two, and the cleverer and more original ; but Don Pablo Delgado, though not perhaps so dexterous and ready as his colleague, was abundant in resource and not behind in argument. Don Luis skirmished for a while, to feel the enemy. He began by talking of the immense interests involved between the United States and Cuba, and the great necessity for friendly relations between them ; by degrees he drifted into complaint of the frauds upon the Cuban custom-house, especially the evasion of the export duties on goods going from Cuba to the United States. "Every day," he said, "we hear of undervaluations ; every day we learn that immense quantities of goods are exported without paying any duty at all. These goods go to the United States, and the United States profits by the fraud."

The adroit Spaniard failed to state that not one in a score of the exporters was an American citizen, and that the smuggling was confined almost exclusively to Spanish subjects. Fisher, of course, was aware of this fact, but did not think it proper to interrupt important international negotiations in order to volunteer the information.

Bainbridge, however, demanded of the clerk how many American exporters there were in Havana, and the subordinate, warned by a glance from Delgado, who had a smattering of English, replied that it would be difficult to state without consulting the consular books ; and as the Secretary was anxious to proceed with the negotiation, he did not continue his inquiries.

Don Luis went on, describing the sufferings of the

Spanish authorities, robbed of their legitimate revenues; and blandly asked whether it would not become a great and friendly nation to intervene in such an emergency.

"It would be an act of generous comity, such as governments may gracefully extend to each other, to take some step to abate this iniquity and injury."

"But what do you propose?" inquired the American. "How can we secure that the Spanish tax in Cuba shall be paid?"

"If the United States would amiably instruct its customs officers to inform the Spanish consuls in American ports of the amounts received from here, the end would be accomplished, and the favor would be highly appreciated," explained the stately Spaniard, as if it were the most ordinary circumstance imaginable for a government to direct its officers to afford such confidential information to those of a foreign power.

It did, however, occur to Bainbridge that it might appear remarkable in the United States for Treasury officials to make their reports to Spanish consuls; and although Fisher had warned him that this demand would be made, its impudent enormity was more apparent when it was definitely proposed.

"We ought to have some equivalent," he said, "if we enter into an arrangement so peculiarly advantageous to Spain."

Palma was ready; he had anticipated the suggestion. "Of course," he exclaimed, as if surprised that Bainbridge had not waited for him to proffer compensation. "Spain is never unwilling to show her amiability; she would not consent to ask, unless she were ready to reciprocate. Your government has long complained of us

for exacting tonnage dues in the United States on American vessels and cargoes going to Cuba. If this we ask is conceded to us, we will agree to abolish these dues. The Spanish consuls will no longer collect them, and in exchange for this stipulation, we will accept reports in regard to exports from the Antilles."

This seemed plausible enough at first to Bainbridge, although the exaction of Spanish dues in American ports was an outrageous infringement of the national prerogative, and should never have been tolerated for an hour. To trade off the remission of these illegal exactions for a concession unprecedented between nations of equal rank, was an even more astounding piece of effrontery than the original request. This idea did not occur to the sapient statesman representing the United States, but he did recollect that the constitution of his country required provisions of the sort suggested to be submitted to the Senate for ratification, and he inquired whether the Spanish ministry was under a similar restriction, or if it had been already authorized to make the stipulation it so generously proposed.

Palma hesitated, for he had not expected this obstacle. Either he had not given the American sufficient credit for perspicacity, or he had supposed he would be wilfully blind; but Delgado came promptly to the rescue and showed himself a competent auxiliary. He declared that, although it would of course be necessary to procure the endorsement of the Cortes for the provision proposed, his government would have no objection to submitting it at a proper time—as if this necessary proceeding were an act of grace on the Spanish part. He did not state what every one familiar with Spanish politics knew, that the government then in being was hold-

ing place on sufferance, with less than a majority, and liable any day to go out of power ; that under such circumstances its recommendation on a point of this importance might have less weight than that of Bainbridge himself.

The American Secretary was aware of these facts, but it would have been ungracious in him to refer to them ; besides, it flashed across his mind that if he offered too many objections he might fail in the main purpose of his visit to Cuba. He had already been foiled in his attempt at bargaining with the marquesa. He had invited the interview with his present interlocutors ; they had now laid down their terms, exactly such as Fisher had foretold, and his own wisest course was to close with them at once, for he began to feel conscious of their strength and his weakness in such affairs. Nevertheless, they had thus far only asked what he had expected, and he breathed long, for all this he thought he might concede. He fancied he had come to the end of the Spanish demands. But he reckoned without his host. The demands had only begun.

The point of the custom-houses being conceded, Delgado at once brought up his heavier guns : " We are all most anxious," he said, in mellifluous tones, for the battery was masked—"we are most anxious to have the American tax on goods imported from Cuba into the United States in Spanish ships remitted." This was indeed a tremendous addition to the demands of the Spaniards. They proposed not only to secure the Spanish tax on goods exported to the United States, but to take off the American tax on the same goods when they reached the United States. The American Government was to remit its own duties, and, at the

same time, secure those of Spain on the same articles, and to secure them through the very custom-houses which were to suffer the loss of millions annually at the suggestion of these modest negotiators! The blow nearly took away the Secretary's breath.

"Is not this an unusually liberal concession that you suggest?" he meekly inquired.

"Ah! but we have something in return to offer," hastily added the crafty Palma. "As I told you before, we never ask when we do not proffer. You have not studied our national character. It has not changed since the days of Cortés and Pizarro. Spaniards are not accustomed to remain under the weight of obligations from friends or enemies. In consideration of this concession we propose an alleviation of the duties imposed in Cuba on American goods—an alleviation amounting to as much as we ourselves receive by the arrangement we now ask."

The equivalent offered with such a show of even-handed equity the Spaniards very well knew was indispensable if what they sought was to be granted at all. The American tax was simply a retaliatory one imposed by Congress because of the outrageous nature of the duties inflicted on American trade by Spain, and it was not within the power of the State Department or the President to take it off until the occasion of the retaliation was removed. But the adroit Spaniards turned the tables, and, demanding first the remission of the American tax, proposed to reward the act which they suggested by a supererogatory beneficence of their own.

The details of both these stipulations were intricate, and calculations long and detailed became necessary to ascertain which government would benefit more by the

arrangement. The discussion was complicated, for Bainbridge was unacquainted with the arithmetic as well as the language of his co-negotiators, and Fisher's knowledge he doubted, or at least the completeness of his communications. At last it was made to appear that the Spanish statement that the concessions were equivalent, although it was not absolutely correct, was yet sufficiently specious to present to a government and a people not too well-informed on the subject. The difference in favor of Spain in reality amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, but this fact could be concealed or denied; and it was not worth while defeating greater objects because of a disadvantage falling only on unknown and unimportant consumers. The American Government, it was agreed, would take off the retaliatory tax of ten per cent. on goods proceeding from Cuba and Porto Rico in Spanish ships. This the well-informed Spaniards very well knew the President could do without referring the matter to Congress, by virtue of a law framed several years before, giving him this authority whenever the occasion of the retaliation was removed. They failed, however, to recall the fact that no corresponding power existed in their own government; and they insisted that this stipulation should go into immediate effect, although those that benefited the United States must be submitted to the Cortes known to be hostile to the present Spanish ministry.

"But how can I possibly arrange this at home?" said Bainbridge. "The country will certainly ask, Why should our concessions go into immediate effect, while those of Spain are delayed and dependent on the uncertain approval of your Legislature? Why not wait till

both can be accomplished, and promulgate both at once?"

"Surely the Señor Secretario does not suspect us of bad faith!" replied Delgado. "But as the señor desires. We had thought he was anxious to consummate the agreement. If delay is his object, that can easily be attained."

The crafty Spaniard very well knew that haste was the object of the Secretary, and Bainbridge did not leave him long without the assurance. "I do not wish delay," he cried. "What I especially desire is expedition. But I must be able to answer the arguments of our political enemies. Can you not suggest some device for defence?" for he recognized the sagacity of these trained politicians and men of the world, and was willing to take a lesson at their hands.

The Spaniards conferred apart for a while, and then returned to the table.

"Since," said Delgado, "it is necessary to offer some inducement to those you represent, we are willing to make still another stipulation in favor of America, to show our desire to cultivate amicable and even intimate relations. We will agree that the duty on live fish imported into Cuba under a foreign flag shall be void for the United States."

They had prepared this point in advance, to be brought forward whenever it was necessary to give a semblance of liberality to their action, and this they thought the suitable moment for its introduction. Now the trade in live fish between Cuba and the United States affects a single American port, Key West, and before this duty was imposed it employed about twenty fishing-smacks, manned almost exclusively by Spanish creoles. Only one important firm in the United States

was engaged in the business, and the proposed provision was worth to the country, or the firm, at most \$120,000 a year. The concession, however, was sounding and grandiloquent in language, and might be made the subject of a separate provision in the treaty. Its insignificance could only be detected after study and examination, which few would have the time or patience to bestow.

"Still," Bainbridge thought, for his experience of the morning had not encouraged him to repose implicit confidence in his colleagues, "it may be that this provision also must be submitted to the Cortes;" and he modestly put the question.

The Spaniards smiled, and shrugged their shoulders, and did not even blush, as they admitted the unfortunate necessity of submitting to this form. "But it was a mere form. The Cortes would, of course, confirm the action of the ministry, and, in any event, the señor's object would be attained; he would be able to represent to his countrymen that he had procured an equivalent for the concessions he had been good enough already to agree to. It was necessary to humor the crowd. We men of the world, and of affairs, understand the stress of political circumstances."

Bainbridge was not so bare of brains that he did not know what he was doing, but he was, as the Spaniards saw, determined to accomplish his object, just as they were determined to accomplish theirs. The difference was that their machinations were in favor of their own country, and his policy was unpatriotic. He pretended, however, not to observe their craft. He knew perfectly well that the Spanish Administration was tottering, and that a new one might not enter into these negotiations at all; might think it politic to stand on its dignity and

gain credit with its constituents for bearding the Yankees openly. He was willing to swallow their impertinence, which he had himself provoked or suggested ; to seem to consider that he was receiving equivalents for what he was in reality giving away ; to appear to believe that the Spanish Government was firm and the Spanish Cortes certain to ratify its action, when he knew to the contrary. But he had qualms, all the same. His vanity was mortified that he must appear to these fellows either a dolt or a tool, or at best an accomplice ; and although they did not blush, he did repeatedly. He had never been engaged in such business before, and the novice in many trades has to be hardened in nerve before he can handle his tools.

The insolent assurance of his antagonists especially touched him to the quick, and he determined at least to broach the subject of the wrongs and impositions on Americans. That pestilent consul-general would surely make trouble if nothing was done in that direction. Fisher had warned the Secretary that the Spaniards would be obstinate, but Bainbridge was determined to ascertain for himself. If he could succeed in securing something, in carrying away one little laurel, it would go far to conceal or cover up his humiliating concessions. Cæsar hid his baldness with his bays. A little protection of American interests or American citizens would redeem a host of omissions or commissions in American eyes.

So he stammered : "There is one point more, Mr. Fisher, to communicate to the gentlemen. Ask whether it is not possible to do something to ameliorate the condition of our citizens here, to lessen their taxes, to take off the restrictions on our trade. Especially this

war tax, which Germans are not subject to ; why should it be laid upon Americans ? Now is the time to settle this matter."

But the Spaniards at once laid aside their smiles and put on their armor of haughty reserve. They were almost affronted at the suggestion. "There had been no wrongs committed on Americans. The only ones who ever suffered at Spanish hands were the guilty ones. The laws of Spain could not be modified to suit strangers."

"But they have been modified to suit the Germans."

"If the Señor Secretario desires to enter into diplomatic negotiations, he must approach the government at Madrid ; we do not meddle here in such matters, and until his Majesty's ministers decide differently the taxes prescribed must be collected."

"But how about the American who has lain in prison for a year without trial ? How about the ship that was sold for an offence that was never committed ?"

"The alleged American offended Cuban law, and when Cuban law provides, he will be tried and punished. The vessel that was sold, was sold for a crime that merited still severer punishment. No one ever suffers unjustly under Spanish rule. We cannot submit to such imputations ; and if the Secretary pretends or presumes to criticise our government, we must consider the discussion closed. We had supposed he met us with amiable intentions, not to recriminate about a parcel of obscure sea-captains or rebellious creoles, claiming a protection that they do not deserve."

Fisher translated faithfully, but the blackening brows and almost menacing gesticulations of the Spaniards already showed that the Castilian blood was up ; the

Castilian pride had been touched in its tenderest point ; the right to trample on Cuba, and on everybody who came to Cuba, was not to be disturbed.

Bainbridge saw that the clerk was right—this point would not be yielded ; and though he would have been glad of the glory of winning, he did not mean to risk his great international schemes, as the Spaniards said, for obscure sea-captains and naturalized creoles ; or, for that matter, for native-born Americans stupid enough to live away from home. If they wanted protection, let them stay where it was secure.

He assured his friends that he had no idea of transcending commercial matters, and since their authority did not extend to the subjects he had mentioned, these should be reserved for other negotiations ; and the Spaniards were bland and suave again.

But before they parted they desired to put in just another nail. Referring to the agreement that all goods going from the United States to Cuba should be admitted under a reduced tariff, they now insisted that this provision should be confined to articles originally manufactured or produced in the United States. The reason for this demand was, that a large transit trade existed in many articles passing through the United States to Cuba, and this trade the proposed construction would secure for Spanish ships, as Spaniards could introduce the goods under a greatly lower tariff than if they went in American bottoms. This was the unkindest cut of all. This straw nearly broke the camel's back. If Bainbridge yielded this, he offered an absolute bonus to Spanish ships as against American ; and, indeed, it was known that Spanish lines were in waiting to be set up at once in opposition to American ones

already existing, if this stipulation were agreed to. He had heard of the scheme; it had been discussed in New York and Washington before he started. He was expected to prevent it. His submission on this point might make him powerful enemies at home; and he fought hard, and showed his adversaries how necessary it was for him not to seem to betray every American interest. But they were concerned for the rival lines, and their resolution was unalterable. This proposition must be agreed to, or the whole negotiation would be abandoned. Fisher assured him that their language was even more determined in Spanish than in the translation, and the clerk implored his master to yield, for Fisher was as anxious as the Spaniards to conciliate the Spanish lines. He had his reasons.

"But how is it possible for me to make such an arrangement?" cried the unhappy youth. "How can I take such a stipulation back to Washington?"

"If that is all," said the specious Spaniards, "we can easily show the gentleman a way out of his difficulties. Say nothing whatever on the subject. We can draw the provision in such a way that it shall seem to mean what the Secretary desires; he then can show it to his friends at home. But let him engage with us that a contrary construction shall be put upon it by the State Department. The treaty will declare that all articles, *procedencias*, 'proceeding from' the United States shall be subject only to the diminished duty; this will be accepted as a triumph in America; and when the goods arrive here months afterward, we will insist that 'proceeding from' means 'originating in.' There will be a discussion, and the State Department will decide that our construction is correct. This will excite little at-

tention ; the treaty will be in force ; there can be no change without a formal revocation of the whole ; and we shall gain what we desire, while the Secretary will suffer no opprobrium, and doubtless accomplish his own purposes besides."

This was indeed a skilful ruse, and commended itself to the badgered diplomatist. It saved his pride, at least with his own countrymen, and he agreed that the proposed construction should be adopted, although it defeated the principal object and purpose of the treaty, insured the establishment of rival lines of steamers to oppose the American ones, and cut off numerous promising branches of trade which American houses had notified him they intended to establish ; for all the goods that might have passed through the United States under the lower duty would now be driven into English channels, or at best would be transferred from America by Spanish steamers. This article of the *procedencias* was a bitter pill, but he choked it down.

It remained now only to consent that the President's proclamation announcing the remission of the American duty should at once be promulgated, and this the Spaniards promptly demanded. They suggested that the necessity to submit the two Spanish concessions to the Cortes need not be mentioned ; but that after the treaty had been laid before the Senate the present form could be modified, and the submission to the Cortes inserted in the modification. The first agreement was the only one that need be publicly announced. The subsequent modifications would hardly be noticed—would be in reality secret—and any objections from the American public would be obviated.

The Spanish concessions, it was true, were to be sub-

mitted to the uncertain Cortes by an unstable ministry ; and ministry and Cortes might both be out of existence before the concessions could be validated. The present Cortes, or the next, might or might not sanction the concessions ; but Bainbridge would get what he was working for, and if the Cortes refused, it was not his fault. The treaty would be heralded as a success, and it would be months before the country could learn that a ratification was necessary, and longer still before it was ascertained whether or not the ratification was withheld.

So Bainbridge agreed that the President should issue his proclamation confirming all that the Spaniards most wanted, and the United States should await the pleasure of the Cortes before learning whether its share of the advantages was assured. The fact that the proclamation was provided for by law made it unnecessary to ask the consent of the Senate ; and the Treasury could give its orders to its own subordinates without reporting them to the country, although its officers were to report their proceedings to Spanish authorities.

"Indeed," said Delgado, with an inspiration of Mephistopheles, "why call it a treaty at all? Let it be an Agreement ; then there is no necessity whatever of a ratification by the Senate. You can announce the accomplished fact ; and if any question arises you have not made a Treaty—it is only an Agreement.

This was, indeed, the solution of many difficulties, and Bainbridge appreciated its felicity. "An Agreement let it be," he said, and breathed long again.

There were some further stipulations about another treaty—promissory pledges to be kept or not, as the makers might decide—and a few fine words were added

about equality of treatment and the removal of all extra duties between the Spanish provinces and the United States, which neither ministry had the slightest right to promise or to perform, but which served to fill out the Agreement and prevent the concentration of attention upon the other provisions with their secret meaning.

Then the gentlemen arose and shook hands, and assured each other of the gratification they had received from making each other's acquaintance. Each was able to state definitely that he was supported by his government; each had secret but actual powers that satisfied the other, although the accredited representatives of both countries were in ignorance of the conference. Assurances of secrecy were interchanged, and the Agreement between the United States and Spain, with especial reference to the Island of Cuba, was consummated. The two administrations, or the peculiar subordinates of each, were satisfied with their work; but Cuba and the United States had gained little by the arrangement. They were left out in the cold. The interests of Cubans, as such, had never once been considered or even mentioned, and those of the United States had been trampled on or disregarded; but the object of the visit of Bainbridge to Havana was accomplished.

A few more smiles, offers of cigars, invitations to dinner, and other civilities, and the high contracting parties separated at the door; but as he passed through the corridors, Bainbridge saw his hosts still following and bowing, and half-way down the stairs there was yet a final salutation to be made.

It was an extraordinary circumstance, that comparatively obscure subordinates like these should have the

control of an international compact; but the explanation is apparent. The Spanish Government knew little and cared less about the interests of Cuba, and the American Government cared little and knew less about the American interests concerned. These subordinates had a peculiar knowledge and an interest of their own in the affair. The Treasury officials were higher in influence at Madrid than their nominal superior, and the American Assistant Secretary approached the President so closely through the father of one and the wife of the other, that there was no one to interfere. This was his Treaty—his Agreement.

As Bainbridge and Fisher got into their *coche* to drive to the consulate, the former exclaimed: "I wish to heaven I had never come to Cuba!"

"Why not, sir? after so brilliant a success as you have had to-day!"

"I don't know what success I have had. I am not so brainless as not to see that these men have had their way in everything. They extorted from me every concession and gave absolutely nothing in return. They refused everything I suggested, won every card in my hand, and left me without either an honor or a trick."

"Who is to know all this, Mr. Secretary? It was made very apparent that you would return to the States with flying colors."

"Flying, indeed! It is I who fly; the colors, I am ashamed to speak of."

"You must be ill, sir, to look at things in this light. You spoke very differently five minutes ago. Surely you have gained the principal object of your visit, and besides, the duties on American goods are lowered."

"Yes, but that cursed construction about *procedencias*

upsets it all. There will be a new line of steamers in a week after the treaty is signed, and the men whom I promised to favor are hit hardest of all."

"But think of the tonnage dues and the live fish."

"Neither of these provisions is secure. Both must be submitted to the Cortes. Suppose this ministry goes out of power, where are we then? And even if the provisions are ratified, there is nothing to be proud of. The collection of Spanish tonnage dues, the United States ought to prohibit at once without asking Spain; and when these men offered me live fish, I could have laughed in their faces, only I felt more like crying. I knew the ignominy of my situation as well as they. I declare, I have a mind not to propose one of the stipulations at home. How can I carry back to Washington such a mess?"

"I thought," said Fisher, "you knew all this before you started. I certainly wrote to Go-Bright what I supposed would be demanded. You could not expect them to yield everything and get no return."

"Pshaw! Fisher; why do you talk like that? These Spanish concessions don't deceive you any more than they do me. The treaty is disgraceful. Did you notice how they behaved when I spoke of American wrongs?"

"My dear Mr. Secretary, you want a glass of wine. You are exhausted by the labors of the morning and the heat of the day. This climate affects you unfavorably. Will you stop at the Cafe de Paris and have some champagne?"

"I thought champagne was not recommended in this climate."

"It is under some circumstances, and this is just the occasion when you require it."

"Well, I do need a stimulus."

They went in, and over a quart of dry Monopole, the only tolerable champagne in Havana, but without any edible, for Bainbridge was absolutely unable to eat, the Secretary began to recover his tone. His view of the proceedings of the morning was not half so gloomy after he had swallowed a couple of glasses of the reviving fluid; and Fisher was able to suggest considerations which made the result seem in one sense brilliant.

"You have really shown yourself a skilful diplomatist, Mr. Secretary. You have been able to concoct a treaty which will at least appear to be a success. The provisions which must be submitted to the Cortes will seem to the American public already gained. The live fish stipulation will look large. Who is to know that it concerns a single firm in a single town? Who is to know that all the fishermen in New England do not send their cargoes to Havana? Who is to know of the construction to be put upon *procedencias*? These things will not be found out for months, and then only piecemeal, and by the few who are interested in them. Then, as to American wrongs, your two articles about 'equality of treatment' and a 'second treaty' may be thought to cover this point. That construction will be no more forced than the *procedencias*. Instead of being outwitted, it is you who do the outwitting; you who have won the tricks; you who have succeeded. You were not playing against the Spaniards, sir, but with them. If they win the game, you share the stakes; the honors are easy."

"Looking at things in this light, they don't appear so bad," said Bainbridge, as he poured out another glass.

"I have done what I came for, certainly, and I shall carry back my Treaty."

"And then, you have crowded out Ernest," said Fisher. "None of his views are embodied in the Agreement."

"No, I'll be damned if they are," said the Secretary. "Even he will admit that. He will be sick of his place soon; and if not, we will make him so. Come, let us leave!"

They drove to the consulate next, where Bainbridge found a telegram from Go-Bright, announcing that Ernest had sailed for his post. He would arrive in three days.

"Then," said Bainbridge, "I start by the next steamer. The fellow will be protesting as soon as he finds out what we have done; and I must be at home to circumvent him. When is there a steamer?"

"There is one on Saturday, but Ernest will be here before then. I can have the steamer sail to-morrow, if you wish."

"I wish it indeed. Say that I have business of great importance to the government, and must certainly leave to-morrow. We do those steamer lines favors enough to ask one in return."

"Oh! they will not hesitate, I am on very good terms with the agents; and to accommodate you, they will do a great deal."

"More than they would if they knew about *procedencias*," said Bainbridge.

Fisher did not laugh. This was too serious a matter for satire. He feared that his influence with the American agents would be lessened if it should be known that he had recommended the construction pro-

posed. He meant, indeed, to assure them of his fruitless efforts to protect their interests. "It is well," he thought, "to be in with both sides. One never knows."

The arrangement was easily made; the day of the sailing was advanced. Before the influence of the wine was spent, Bainbridge even left his cards at the palace in person, but the Captain-General and the marquesa were "not at home." This fact, however, was unknown at the entrance, and had to be ascertained by inquiry. He did not see his coadjutors, or, as Fisher called them, his partners, in the game of Wednesday, but allowed the clerk to assure them that he would carry out the views agreed upon; and thus he sailed from Havana, like some others who have capitulated—"with all the honors of war."

Fisher obtained a leave to follow by the next steamer.

The other negotiators also had their conference and their wine, and though the language was different the sentiment was similar. They agreed with Bainbridge in his earlier mood; they too thought they had outwitted him, beaten and browbeaten him; but they also recollected that he played on the same side, so that he might not have been so completely stupid as he allowed himself to seem. When all the parties to an Agreement are satisfied, what more can be desired?

CHAPTER XVII.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS.

FISHER went punctiliously to the steamer to take his leave of the Secretary on Friday, and as punctiliously to the wharf to receive his new superior on Saturday. Two days afterward he himself quitted Havana. An hour before sailing he presented his accounts, which were not made up to the time of leaving, but ceased some weeks before; in these he retained a thousand dollars more than his ordinary pay. This money Ernest declined to allow him, but Fisher refused to repay it. As Ernest was responsible in bonds to the government, and Fisher had deducted these funds from government moneys, the matter was not a personal but an official one, and when the clerk positively refused to obey, his superior refused to allow him to sail. Strong, however, in the belief that Bainbridge dared not desert him, Fisher sailed in defiance of his commanding officer, carrying off public moneys for which the latter was responsible. Ernest at once telegraphed to the Secretary of State, and wrote detailed reports of these proceedings, supposing, as a matter of course, that the clerk would be promptly dismissed. But no notice was taken of his telegram or of his official or private letters. He asked for instructions in regard to making out his accounts under these unprecedented circumstances, but received no reply.

Meantime Bainbridge arrived at Washington, and negotiations for the treaty were formally opened at Madrid. The stipulations in favor of Spain were all agreed to, and those in favor of the United States, which it was known must be submitted to the Cortes, were all inserted, exactly as if no such necessity existed. The whole matter was left to Bainbridge. The Secretary of State was glad to be relieved of the burden, and the President was persuaded by Adelaide to give the young man this chance to distinguish himself. So Bainbridge wrote to great merchants and shippers in New York and elsewhere, and every one was notified that this was to be his treaty. The President himself informed important individuals who approached him on the subject that Bainbridge was intrusted with the entire affair. The Minister at Madrid was employed to carry out his views, and acted as clerk to communicate the instructions of his young superior, or report the answers of the Madrid Cabinet. The real business had already been transacted elsewhere.

The Consul-General at Havana, however, was kept in complete ignorance of what was going on. Not a hint of the fact that a treaty was in contemplation was furnished him in public despatches or private letters, although his official acts were more affected by its details than those of any other servant of the government, and the information he ought to have been able, and was able, to furnish should have modified every provision in the Agreement. But his views had been already set forth; he had recommended a very different arrangement from that which found favor in the eyes of his superiors. He had urged a manly, spirited policy, defending American citizens, protecting American in-

terests, and looking to the extension and cultivation of American trade; not cringing to Spanish officials, not truckling to Spanish custom-houses, not abandoning the honor and dignity of the country to concede untenable and intolerable Spanish demands. Such a man was of course not in the counsels of those who had concocted the Agreement with Spain and the treaty was published in the newspapers of Havana before it was sent to Ernest by his government. It was even circulated in New York and Cuba by the Department while it was withheld from the American representative.

When a copy was finally furnished to him at the same time as to the subordinate consuls, he and most of them at once perceived its inadequacy, its partiality to Spain, its failure to protect Americans, its general pusillanimity. Representations were made immediately, not only by Ernest but by other consuls of experience, of the injurious effects its provisions would have upon American interests; but the government had taken its stand, and was not to be moved by the statements of men on the ground.

Meanwhile Ernest was becoming convinced that there was a reason for the failure to listen to his charges against Fisher. To the original accusations he had now added others, still more serious, based upon later discoveries, but all were alike unnoticed. He began to perceive that these extraordinary efforts to screen Fisher were coincident with the negotiation of a treaty dishonorable and injurious to the country. He remembered the visit of Bainbridge to Havana made in his absence, immediately before Fisher's departure, and on the eve of the negotiation of the treaty. He remembered the difficulty he had found in Washington in procuring an

interview with Littleton; how he had been put off again and again until Bainbridge had actually started. He recalled the fact that he was not notified of the intention of Bainbridge to visit his post, but had discovered it only a day or two before that personage sailed; although Fisher had been informed a month in advance, and been directed to prepare for the arrival of the Secretary.

He noticed now a series of petty persecutions directed against himself by the State Department; a reduction of the number of clerks previously allowed, and at the same time complaints that the work which those clerks should have performed was not done; a refusal to permit him the freedom in the administration of his office which was given as a matter of course to every consul in the service, including his own subordinates; an interruption of all despatches of consequence for months; and generally a series of disagreeable and undeserved rebuffs—all contrived to disgust him with his post and induce him to resign.

At first he could not believe that this conduct was intentional. He had been on terms, if not of intimacy or friendship, at least of ordinary social acquaintance with all the higher officers of the State Department for years; there had been an interchange of courtesies between them; he had received assurances from both the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of their friendly disposition, and he did not deem it possible that there could be a steady and persistent attack upon him from this quarter, when he thought he had given no cause.

But after a while he discovered the cause. He had pleaded for an honorable and dignified policy in Cuba,

while the government had determined on a miserable and ignominious one; and his recommendations reflected on the conduct of his superiors. He was harshly rebuked for daring to differ with the Department; he was directed to withdraw statements to the Cuban authorities which he had never made; he was neglected and disregarded in matters of the highest consequence to his post; and now for four months his repeated accusations of dishonesty and insubordination against a man serving under him were insultingly ignored. Even his representations intended for the Treasury were withheld, and that Department was not allowed to know the character and extent of the charges he had made against Fisher.

Repeated statements of injuries and wrongs to American citizens were at the same time neglected or depreciated, and he was told that his extreme views were not in harmony with those of the Department; that American shippers were more likely to make false oaths than Cuban custom officers; that flagrant insults offered to the government by Spanish officials were not so regarded by the Department; and, as a crowning humiliation, he was directed to make known to the Cuban authorities the contents of these despatches disputing and overruling his views.

His eyes being finally opened to the methods, if not to the purposes, of Bainbridge, he wrote to the Secretary of State direct, reciting temperately some of the acts of which he complained, especially the neglect to notice in any way the grave charges against Fisher. When this letter reached Washington, Littleton sent for his son and handed him the communication.

"What does this mean?" he inquired. "What have

you been doing to exasperate Ernest? He is a good enough man. Why can't you let him manage his consulate as he wants to? This is not the time, when a Presidential nomination is approaching, to provoke enmities."

"It is nothing," said Bainbridge superciliously; "the fellow is dissatisfied because he cannot have everything his own way."

"But does he not make charges of corruption?"

"Oh, that is a mere personal quarrel between him and his clerk. I will look into it before long. Let me write the answer to that letter."

"Yes, do," said the indolent minister; and the Assistant relieved him of the task.

Ernest accordingly received a reply in Bainbridge's handwriting, but signed by Littleton, saying that no harm had been done him by the delay in attending to Fisher, excusing and shielding the clerk, but not stating that the charges would be examined, and declaring that the Department had no authority to allow him further clerical force. Yet the Department had a contingent fund for exactly such purposes, and had drawn from it the year before in Ernest's favor, when it had chosen to be just. It knew perfectly well, and had admitted, that the business at his consulate was more complicated and crowded than at any other in the service, and far more important in its diplomatic character than at most of the legations of the United States. It had promised him to lay these considerations before Congress, and had not kept its word.

Ernest then asked that a young man in the consulate, whom he knew to be honest and capable, should be appointed deputy, to relieve him from some of the labor

of signing documents, a deputy being invariably nominated by a consular officer, and his nomination as a matter of course approved. An exception to this rule had never been known by Ernest in a service of thirteen years in Great Britain and Cuba. But the request was refused, on the ground that the nominee had not been long enough in the consular service, nor enjoyed a sufficient acquaintance with the business community of Havana. Ernest showed that the man had been more than a year in the service of the consulate, and had a better acquaintance with the business community of Havana than he had himself. But the refusal was not revoked; and the reason was obvious. This man had unearthed the iniquities of Fisher, and Fisher had confederates both in the Treasury and State Departments as unscrupulous and as full of machinations as himself. In this way the proper and legitimate administration of the consulate was thwarted, and Fisher was upheld against the third superior officer in succession who had reported against him to the government.

Simultaneously with the letter written by Bainbridge but signed by Littleton, Ernest received four public despatches, each one of which was intended as an affront, to punish him for daring to complain of his superior officer. On the same day a claim of his against the Treasury was disallowed, to persuade him, if possible, that all the branches of the government were in solid array, and that if he fought one he must fight all. This would have frightened some subordinates, but Ernest stood fire. Instead of succumbing, he again addressed the Secretary, under the supposition that even yet Littleton had not been made aware of the facts, and recited them in chronological order; this

time directly charging improper influence of Fisher, and that the action complained of was corrupt. A copy of this letter he forwarded to the President.

When this communication arrived, Littleton began to be alarmed. He again summoned the Assistant Secretary, and now demanded the particulars of the charges preferred by Ernest against Fisher.

"Why in Heaven's name have you allowed accusations of this kind to remain unnoticed so long? This silence is injurious to the Department. Let me see every one of these despatches to which reference is made. I am to blame for trusting so much to you."

Bainbridge muttered something about the press of business and the absurdity of making personal quarrels the subject of official notice.

"But I tell you this is not personal. This man declares he will wait as long as we choose for what concerns himself personally, but for now nearly four months you have allowed serious charges to remain unexamined and unnoticed; and your character and mine are concerned. I wish to see every one of these despatches."

The papers were brought, and Littleton spent an hour or two examining them. He then sent for his son again, and the ordinarily calm and phlegmatic placeman was aroused. He burst forth at once.

"What have you been doing? The matter is even worse than Ernest declares. What reason have you for screening this clerk? for reason undoubtedly exists; you would never have taken this course without one. Ernest was at least our political friend; we owed him compensations, and we had promised them to him. He was inoffensive in Cuba. The stand he took in regard

to Americans was correct; if we had ships, and if it was not so much trouble, I would support him. But why insult him? Why deprive him of clerks? Why not allow him to name his own deputy? Every other consul has the privilege. And why in Heaven's name screen this subordinate? for screening it is, not to listen to accusations for months.

The young man reddened and was silent, but bent his head.

"This must be answered, sir. We shall have a Congressional investigation about our ears. Make a clean breast of it. Why did you conceal the treaty from him? Heaven and earth!"—and the unfortunate old man rose from his chair, and shook his finger at his relative. "Answer me, sir!" he said, and then staggered back; and as the younger man stood before him and still made no reply, the minister buried his face in his hands. His reputation had been unsullied; he had lived nearly his allotted time, and intended soon to retire, without ever a word of scandal having lighted on his name; and now, at the end of his career, he foresaw alarming possibilities. His whole frame shook with emotion. After a moment or two he became calmer; and raising his head, he said, in soberer tones: "Can you say nothing?"

The two were now both seated, the son on the opposite side of the great official desk of the Secretary of State. He looked with a scowl of malignant triumph at his father, and leaning his elbows on the desk, and his chin on his hands, he growled:

"Whatever has been done is your act. You are responsible for the treaty before the world. You have signed letters screening Fisher, as you call it."

"And you dare tell me this!"

"I tell you the truth, and you yourself cannot gainsay it."

He was about to add more, when a messenger was announced from the President. This summons opens all official doors at all hours, and the interview was interrupted. The messenger brought a copy of the letter from Ernest which the two Secretaries were discussing. The President had simply referred it to Littleton, who opened the paper, and started as if stung by a snake.

"Worse and worse," he exclaimed. "This very letter is before the President."

"Better and better," said the younger man. "You will now see the wisdom of what I say. You must pursue the course you have begun. You must continue to support Fisher. If the State Department is not stronger than a single consul-general, it had better not exist. He dares appeal from you. Punish him."

"I will manage this affair to suit myself," said his father, after a pause. "You have made a pretty muddle of it. If you had secrets that required concealing, that is no reason to provoke the very man who might discover and divulge them. You should have tried to placate and propitiate him, and render him an ally."

"That would be impossible. He is too persistent. Look how he has followed Fisher. Eight official despatches in less than four months."

"Look out, young man, that he doesn't follow you as hard."

"There is nothing to do but to crush him," said the other. "It is war to the knife."

"Well, I shall first try other means."

CHAPTER XVIII.

COMPLICATIONS.

MEANWHILE the schemes of the conspirators in behalf of Carlos were all deranged. When Catalina arrived at the Morro on her return from Espiritu Santo, she found her brother ill—the natural result of confinement and bad air, anxiety about his fate, and the restlessness of a young man interested in public affairs, and suddenly thwarted at the threshold of what he had hoped would prove an important career. Carlos was languid in body and low in spirit; he had violent pains in the head and back, and was feverish. Catalina recognized with alarm the tokens of a disease which is tedious and lingering under the most favorable circumstances, and demands, above all things, change of scene, abundance of fresh air, good company, and pleasant thoughts. She strove to soothe and distract her brother by telling him of the friendly disposition of both the Captain-General and the marquesa, of her own plans for his rescue, and finally of the positive promise of Ramon to aid him. She called the young Spaniard in to assure his friend, and Arriete, perceiving the condition of Carlos and the motive of his sister, joined quickly in her efforts to inspire and divert the sufferer. But the youth was listless, and nothing about himself could excite or interest him.

Finally Catalina bethought her to tell the story of

Aguero, and saying to Ramon, "You are of our counsels now, and must know all our secrets," she narrated the circumstances of the brigand's connection with their aunt, of his coming to Havana for the sake of Carlos, of the evening at the palace, and the visit to Espiritu Santo. With this romantic recital she succeeded for a while in arousing the attention of the invalid; his eye kindled and his cheek flushed when he learned what his chief had risked for him.

"The noble fellow!" he exclaimed; "he is worthy of his place at the head of our cause. And you too, Ramon, how can I thank you for what you are doing for me? I know what it costs you, for I also am a soldier, though only a recruit. You are willing to sacrifice your military honor for me. God bless you!"

"I shall be amply rewarded if I save you, Carlos," said the other, stealing a timid glance at Catalina, who returned him only a slight response. The poor girl suffered torture every time that she encouraged Ramon, but endured almost as much when she withheld the meagre show of regard to which as yet he dared to think himself entitled. His very modesty made him more manly in her eyes, and his reticence almost extorted a regret that she could not give him what he so richly deserved.

They remained an hour with Carlos, till it was almost dark, trying to relieve his bodily pain, and, what was far more important, to soothe his mental suffering. They could not bear to see him lose heart, who had been so strong and hopeful until now; but the disease with which he was evidently threatened has for one of its earliest indications a depression of spirit, which for a man in his condition was doubly distress-

ing. The parting was more touching than ever, for Catalina was convinced that her brother was already stricken by the dreaded fever of the tropics. She would not say so to him, lest it might disturb him, but as she walked to the boat with Arriete, she disclosed her fears.

"I think I should go at once to the palace," she said, "and procure permission to remain with him during his illness. Do you think the General will refuse me?"

"How can any one refuse you anything, Doña Catalina," exclaimed her lover, uttering his own feeling more earnestly than he knew.

She smiled sadly, and Ramon, answering her look and smile, continued: "At least the marquesa will assist us. Her influence with the General is all-powerful, and she is a true friend to you, señorita."

"She is, indeed," said the girl, "a true and dear friend, and your suggestion is a good one. I will go to her first. And you too, dear Ramon"—and the youth looked up delighted, as she called him by that name—"how can I thank you for your interest in him who is so dear to me?"

"He is dear to me too, Doña Catalina; doubly dear, for his own sake as well as yours, and my whole life, my every effort is devoted to whatever is dear to you. If it were not for his misfortune, it would be a happiness to serve him; and if I do succeed in saving him, I shall indeed be satisfied."

She rewarded him this time with a fervent look, and pressed his hand, but could not refrain from saying to herself: "He will not save him altogether unaided. Agüero's help is indispensable, and him I cannot reward as he deserves and as I desire."

They went direct to the palace. The marquesa received them at once, although it was near the dinner hour.

"Dear Marquesa," said Catalina, "my brother is about to be ill—he has all the symptoms of a fever;" and she burst into tears. The great woman, whose heart was as big as her brain, put her arms around the girl, and held the throbbing head to her own bosom, kissing the tears away.

"My poor child, your miseries come thick. But be more yourself. Be hopeful. Be courageous. Perhaps it is not so bad as you think. This may be a passing attack. At all events, Carlos shall have the best medical skill;" and then, anticipating Catalina's request, "he shall have care and comfort too. Would you like to be with him, dearest? I know you would. Every true woman would in your place; and you shall. Stay here. I will see the General now."

Ringling the bell, she said to the servant who answered, "Let dinner wait," and went to her husband's apartment.

She had some difficulty in carrying her point.

"It is impossible, Inez," said the General. "The Volunteers would say it is some scheme to let rich Cubans suffer less than ordinary criminals. I cannot make a difference."

"And is there no difference?" said this woman of ancient lineage and of high degree. "What would be no punishment at all to a man of coarse life and instincts is death to one of us. Suppose our boy, the one whose mourning I still wear," she said, with trembling lips, for neither had forgotten their only child—"suppose our Luis lay in such a dungeon, and

wanted his mother's arm around his neck, his mother's care to comfort him, his mother's kiss to soothe him; what would you think of the official who refused me? What shall I think if you refuse this? There can be no risk with Catalina. You must let the boy be taken to a better chamber, and I myself will go to see him, and take Catalina with me. I suppose my loyalty is above suspicion," she said proudly, through the tears that the thought of her lost son had summoned. "Unless you let Catalina go, I go, and stay, Don Luis," she added, almost sternly.

The General looked puzzled and touched at once. He adored his wife, but his ideal of duty was high, and he was most averse to incur the censure of the world, or rather of those who made his world in Cuba; not so much afraid of the criticism of his superiors, who knew his character and his career, as unwilling that the common creatures whom he despised should think him weak or derelict. It was not an ignoble infirmity. An ordinary person would hardly have been susceptible to it, but it could not stand before the impetuous force of his wife's invocations; for they were not the entreaties of a suppliant, they were like the appeal of a queen, not to, but from, a tribunal.

"One of us women shall remain with that boy. In the name of our own child, I adjure you."

He knew her well, and that she would keep her word. And it was no ordinary threat; she felt all the force of his objections, but was determined that she would serve her friend.

"Well, Inez, it is a dangerous thing you ask, but you compel me. Catalina shall go to her brother."

"And she must have a suitable apartment," said the marquesa. "Put soldiers enough on the outside ; make everything secure ; but give the boy a chance to recover. And remember, Catalina de Casa-Nueva comes of a race as noble as our own. Treat her as becomes your station as well as hers. Let Ramon be on guard, and our own family honor shall answer for the prisoner. Arriete will agree."

"As you will," said the General.

"Write me the order at once," continued the true woman, "so that she may go to-morrow, early."

And the General sat down, his toilet incomplete, and himself wrote the order ; and then his wife, still handsome and in the prime of womanhood, gave him a reward that many younger men would have envied, and which the greatest man in Cuba was proud and happy to deserve and to receive.

Early on the morrow all was arranged. Carlos was already worse, but was removed to another room in the officers' quarters ; sentinels were placed so that the soldiers could be aware that there was no chance for escape ; an outer apartment connecting with that of her brother was prepared for Catalina ; and still on the outside of this Don Ramon was placed. The marquesa kept her word, and accompanied her friend to the prison, sat with the prisoner for a while, and strove to cheer him, and afterward left the brother and sister alone. Catalina went to the door with her, and then was locked within. They kissed each other through the grating, and Catalina looked her thanks ; she could not trust herself to speak, but the other understood, and said : "Not now, dearest, don't tell me now. I have done only what you would do for me. When he is well,

I will listen. I shall come every few days; and do you write, or send me word by Arriete of all you want."

Aguero went on Wednesday to the Casa Cordoba as early as he thought he would be admitted. The condesa was at home, and he was ushered into a great sala, where the old noblewoman sat in the rocking-chair that Cuban ladies always use, and invited him to take another.

"You were determined not to see the Doña Catalina yesterday, Juan," she said; "and now I do not know when you can see her."

"What do you mean?" asked Aguero, quickly.

"Her brother is dangerously ill, and she has gone to nurse him at the Morro. The Captain-General has consented, and the marquesa accompanied her, and to-day she is locked up with Carlos, as much a prisoner as he."

"Carlos ill, and the Doña Catalina with him! This is indeed a calamity. And I must leave Havana to-morrow! Aunt, dear aunt," exclaimed the bandit suddenly, "do you know that I am Aguero, the chief of the brigands?"

"You, Juan de la Campa, a brigand! What do you mean? Are you mad, Juan?"

"No, I am not mad, but I feel as if I soon might be. Listen. Be calm, and let me try to be so."

The old lady had risen from her chair, and the traces of her former beauty were lighted into expression by the excitement of the moment. Her gray locks were still heavy, and her old eyes retained much of their pristine fire; her venerable hands were full of feeling, and she gathered her white robes around her with the air of a woman who had known emotions in her day.

"What do you mean? What have you to say?" she exclaimed, in broken but not discordant tones.

"My dear aunt, when I went abroad I went determined to return as the avenger of my brother and my country."

At the mention of his brother, the old lady shivered, for the murdered boy had been her favorite kinsman, and she had never forgotten or forgiven his fate. Aguero went on, the condesa still standing, but resting her arm on a marble vase, as high as herself, that stood near.

"I came back almost a year ago, and landed on the eastern coast of the island. I set out at once to arouse the Cubans. I was not personally known, but I was able to interest them. I saw that the only way to begin a movement which should finally secure to us the mastery of our own country, was to show Cubans that we could do something ourselves—something that Spain could not control. Well, aunt, I am Aguero. I secured Carlos de Casa-Nueva as one of my band. In doing this I saw his sister. Can you wonder if I loved her? Carlos was captured almost instantly, and I came into Havana, disguised as myself, to save him. Aunt, we had it all arranged. I saw the Doña Catalina, you know, at the cathedral and at your house. Forgive me that I did not tell you then. We went to the Espiritu Santo; Don Ramon had agreed to help us. Carlos was to escape, and now he is ill; the Doña Catalina is with him, and I, his chief, who led the boy into peril—I am here, as helpless as a woman. Countess de Cordoba, I charge you by your name, your rank, your race, your patriotism—help me."

The grand old woman listened with passionate in-

terest, for the sentiments of kindred, of race, of patriotism, even of rank, that Juan had evoked, were still strong within her.

"Juan, I will do what I can. I am Cuban; you know I love you, and I love Carlos. What do you want of me? I shall not fail; I am the Countess de Cordoba."

"Aunt, I love Catalina; but she has promised Ramon de Arriete that if he rescues Carlos, he can claim his reward. I do not know, but I think, I feel—I believe—Catalina prefers me. She accepts Ramon because thus only she can save or rescue Carlos. I may be mistaken, but, aunt, I love her; and whether she loves me or no, I will serve her brother. I would serve Carlos if he were not her brother, for I induced him to join us. I owe him the fealty that a chief owes his follower."

"Yes, yes, my boy, I understand; of course," ejaculated the old widow of a grandee of Spain. "Go on; what can I do?"

"Help me, aunt," said the man, helplessly; and he sank into a chair and laid his head upon a table, his arms clasped over his forehead.

"I am ashamed of myself, but"—raising himself and looking steadily into the old woman's eyes—"I love, and you know what that means. You were my father's sister; our blood is the same."

The old lady came to him and put her hand upon his throbbing temples: "I am; I know; I have loved. I will help. I am for you. I am Cuban, and I am La Campa. Tell me what I can do for you, my boy;" and she kissed him. The embers she had thought extinct blazed up anew, and she remembered her own youth, her own passions, and determined to aid her kinsman.

"I must go to-day," said the bandit; "I must leave

Havana—leave her who is more precious to me than all that Havana contains. But will you tell her that the moment her brother is able to think of rescue, I will return? Will you present my image to her? Will you make her think I love her, though I do not hope? She has told me she is pledged to another, and I may not speak of love; but let her know that I am true, though not impertinent. Act for me, aunt, as a gentlewoman can act for a kinsman."

He swallowed his emotion, gathered up his strength, stood splendidly erect, and said: "Aunt Cordoba, Countess Cordoba, I leave all in your hands."

"Don Juan de la Campa," replied the old noblewoman, "I will do for you all that is possible; you know it."

He kissed her hand and rushed out of the room, only to come back and say: "Be sure to let me hear from you. I will send a note every day. Detain the messenger until you can despatch a reply by him. Tell me all." And again he tore himself away.

While Carlos was lying ill at the Morro, Ernest returned to Havana. He was a close friend of the family of Catalina's mother, and also visited the condesa's house on a footing of intimacy. One day, when the old lady came by permission to sit with Catalina for a while, the girl and her aunt discussed their anxieties. Carlos was now somewhat better, and immediately on his recovery his trial was to take place. The condesa had learned that the Volunteers were determined to make him an example. He came of noble blood, and he was an American citizen, and either circumstance was, in their eyes, a reason for his sacrifice.

"What can we do, Catalina? Do you suppose I could have any influence with the Consul-General? So staunch an American ought certainly to take up the cause of his countryman."

"Everything is worth trying, dear aunt. Will you go to him?"

"Of course I will; I will go to-day, as soon as I leave this prison."

She kept her word, and Ernest was more than willing to aid them. Not only motives of friendship, but the principles involved, appealed to the Consul-General. An American, guilty, at the most, only of an intention to commit an illegal act, was entitled to protection, or, at any rate, to a fair trial and a just decision. Many Americans, it is true, had been denied every semblance of justice by Spanish tribunals, but Ernest was determined that while he held his post this should not occur without both protest in Cuba and urgent appeal to his government.

He wrote earnestly to the State Department, but his invocations were unheeded. He repeated the applications, but in vain, for Bainbridge was on the spot to oppose him. Finally he addressed a letter to Adelaide, for he had known her long, and believed she had noble impulses and an ambition to exert a great influence worthily. He told her of the young American, Cuban-born, of the palliations for his offence—his youth, his patriotic feeling, his gallantry; and he painted the character of Catalina, the Daughter of Cuba. He thought the touch of romance in the story would enlist the sympathy of a woman, and he was right in the general surmise; but he did not suspect the peculiar and personal interest already aroused in the wife of the

President. His very arguments inflamed the rage of Adelaide.

"Here," she thought, "is another man enticed by this irresistible sorceress. But I will show both Ernest and Bainbridge that women in Washington have influence as well as in Havana. This creole is determined that her brother shall be saved under the pretext that he is an American. I will not allow the American name to be prostituted to rescue a Cuban bandit."

She flattered herself, for a moment, that it was a lofty indignation that excited her. But she was too clever to be long deceived, even in her passion. "No," she said to herself, "it is a contest between us two women. Let us see which is the stronger. My charms against hers ; my wit pitted against that of the tropics. I am sorry for the creole ; she has a right to try to save her brother. But she trenches on my prerogatives. She would exert her sway over my subjects. She would control Bainbridge, would she?—against me? We shall see whether she will succeed. I have a President to work with, and she has a Consul-General. I wonder which is the stronger."

While she was thus excited, she met Bainbridge, and asked him about his Cuban experiences.

"How did you like the Havana ladies? Your father tells me you found them most attractive."

He was not unwilling to show her that other women had desired to please him, and had succeeded. He dilated on the fascinations of the creoles, and, naturally, fell into a description of Catalina, which Adelaide was waiting for. The discarded lover noticed that his companion listened more eagerly, and guessing the cause, went off at once into a rhapsody. He told of the simple

dress and heroic style, so different from Adelaide's sumptuous costumes and imperial manner; he pretended to have been even more fascinated than was true, by Catalina's floating tresses and liquid eyes; he described the evening at Espiritu Santo and the walk under the palm-trees, suggesting his susceptibility, but omitting to depict his discomfiture. But his revenge culminated when he spoke of music, for Adelaide did not sing, and he told of the passion in Catalina's voice, till he made her rival exclaim: "I wonder you did not succumb to such charms, and remain in Cuba altogether. The creole divinity seems not to have been coy. I have heard from others about her. Is she the lady who visited you at the consulate?"

"Ah, madam, she is a lady. She came, with her aunt, to implore me to help her brother."

The wicked thrust aroused him to defend the girl, for, after all, he was a gentleman, and he resented the insinuation, which Adelaide was ashamed of almost before she had uttered it. Yet she hated Catalina all the more because Bainbridge defended her, and she determined again that Carlos must suffer.

That night she broached the subject to the President as they sat alone in the red-room, after a levee.

"What is the last news from Cuba?" she asked.

"Nothing very important. Bainbridge made a treaty which has to be ratified at Madrid; that you know. We have nothing further except that Ernest—you remember him?—is pestering the Department in behalf of a sham American whom the Spaniards have properly enough shut up in the Morro."

"He wrote me about him," said Adelaide, "and to punish him for using such means—for thinking that

I would attempt to influence you in public matters—I beg you will do the exact opposite of what he suggests.”

“That is a very proper way of treating him,” said the President, pompously. “I am glad you perceive the impropriety of intervening in such matters. Your sense of what your delicacy and my dignity demand, is absolutely perfect. You know exactly how far your province extends, and where it ends.”

She rose and made him a courtesy such as a subject makes to a sovereign, and he was too much flattered by the obeisance to perceive the satire or the mockery. Ahasuerus extended his sceptre, but Adelaide was not the simple Esther that he thought.

The next day the Consul-General at Havana was informed that the government did not think it advisable to interfere in behalf of so flagrant an offender against Spanish law as Mr. Carlos de Casa-Nueva.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONSPIRACY IN WASHINGTON.

Soon after this, Ernest received a very diplomatic and elaborate letter from the Secretary of State, intended to placate, if not propitiate, the troublesome subordinate; disclaiming any intention to disregard him, and endeavoring to gloze or palliate the treatment of which he had complained, without, however, in any way disavowing it; still undoing no wrong, taking no step to examine the charges against Fisher, the determination to shield whom was as apparent as ever, and making no reference to the action of the Department in concealing the negotiation of a treaty from the officer to whom by every rule of official courtesy or propriety it should first have been made known. The whole letter was an evasion; but the minister was evidently inclined to hedge, and did not care to increase an opposition that might become formidable; and if a few pleasant words would pacify this would-be Cerberus, in Heaven's name let him have the sop. Accordingly, he resented none of the imputations that Ernest had so freely launched against the Department, deeming it wiser to avoid this subject altogether; but had those imputations been unfounded, he would and should have either called upon their author to sustain them, or dismissed him summarily from the service. It was a bitter mortification

to the minister to write this letter, but he could perceive no more prudent course.

At the same time the whole tone of official documents was changed: despatches were rained upon Ernest full of praise of his fidelity, his spirit, his zeal, his acquaintance with affairs; communications of his own that had remained unanswered for months were all at once recollected, and received replies; copies of despatches to the Minister at Madrid, and of letters to the Spanish Envoy at Washington were forwarded to him; and a sudden show of confidence and cordiality was made. But not one word was said in any official document about Fisher; no real aid was given, no injustice was righted, nothing complained of was rectified.

The first-fruits of the negotiation meanwhile had already appeared. The question of the *procedencias* was promptly raised. The treaty had hardly been promulgated before the Spanish authorities in Cuba made known the construction they put upon the word. The importance of the point was seen at once by American merchants in Havana, who directly appealed to Ernest against the Spanish ruling. The consul had received no intimation whatever from the government of its views on any point involved in the Agreement, and he put the obvious interpretation upon the words; he naturally supposed "proceeding from" meant "proceeding from." Nevertheless, this was a matter of consequence, and he telegraphed to the Department for instructions. The answer was prompt, peremptory, and decisive; entirely in accord with the Spanish pretensions, ignoring the arguments of the Americans, upsetting their plans, favoring Spanish shippers at the expense of American lines, and altogether unacceptable

to every American not only in Cuba, but in the United States, who was interested in Cuban trade. A host of protestations were hurled at the government from those who were injured—from Boston, New York, New Orleans and Havana—and Ernest and other consular officers supported their countrymen to the best of their ability; but the Department was inexorable. Ernest told of the Spanish lines that were waiting for this decision in order to rival Americans, of the American traders who were hoping to undertake new enterprises; but the Spanish lines were fostered, and the American enterprises frustrated; and the Department fulminated long and elaborate opinions to prove that "proceeding from" meant "originating in." It convinced nobody of anything except of its own indifference to American interests and its determination to satisfy Spanish greed. Its concern in this matter was indeed so keen, that upon Ernest's first inquiry the reply of the Department was more than harsh; and although he had simply asked for information before announcing the construction of the Department, he was told if he had made known a different view, he was to proceed at once to the Spanish authorities and recall his utterances. He had, however, been properly subordinate, and had waited for the decision of his government before he promulgated it. The extreme anxiety displayed on this point contrasted strongly with the indifference with which his appeals and adjurations were received when an American citizen or an American interest was endangered. The especial solicitude of the American Government was reserved for Spaniards.

A great flourish had been made about the completion of the original Agreement. But within six weeks from

the signing of the document, a new ministry came into power at Madrid, and refused to be held by the arrangements of its predecessor; so that the necessity for submitting the provisions to the Cortes became at once public, and a new treaty had to be negotiated. In this, four of the original articles were sacrificed, two being omitted altogether, while those affecting the export duties in American ports, and the duty on live fish in Cuba, it was now openly agreed should, "in due time," be submitted to the Cortes, the Cortes having been dissolved, and the date for the new election not having been determined. Thus all the compensations for the American concessions were either frittered or explained away, or absolutely, for the present, null and void.

The modified treaty, however, thus exchanged in the cradle, was kept carefully concealed from vulgar eyes. Its existence was one of the state secrets of the administration, not communicated to the outside world. The modification was not given to the newspapers, and the country, as the Spanish friends of Bainbridge had foretold, was not aware of the metamorphosis—not even that it had become unavoidable, much less that it had been absolutely effected. In a few weeks the new Spanish ministry openly announced that it did not hold itself bound to continue the negotiations which the American State Department had triumphantly proclaimed were to be speedily renewed; but this circumstance, also, was not generally known, and the administration escaped for a while the ridicule and censure that its ignominious failure, to call it by no worse name, deserved.

And so the provisions of the treaty injurious to the

United States went into effect, while those beneficial to this country were postponed or construed away. The retaliatory tax was taken off from Cuban goods coming to the United States, but that on goods proceeding in transit from the United States remained. The Cuban imports to the United States were duly reported by the American Treasury to the Spanish consuls, and the same consuls levied their tonnage dues on American ships and American goods in American ports; even American live fish still paid the tax to Cuban custom-houses. New lines of Spanish steamers began to run between Cuba and the United States to rival the Americans, and the attacks on American citizens in Cuba were prosecuted with reinvigorated and unrestricted zeal.

The Bainbridge party, indeed, seemed to suppose that they were placed in high position for their own benefit and amusement. It did not, apparently, occur to them that they had duties to perform beyond those of society or routine; that they held office to serve the country and its interests. They acted as if the American people existed on their account and for their advantage. In this matter it was not a question of annoying Ernest or maintaining Fisher that was of consequence; these were only the incidents and illustrations of their policy. But these men thwarted great things. Their influence was not negative, it was positive. The development of American enterprize, the employment of American capital, the extension of American commerce, the advantage of the American nation, were hindered because they were in power.

The possible or eventual acquisition of Cuba, or even its pacification, its restoration to good government, its

relief from such horrors and iniquities as are incessant there, may have been beyond their province ; it may not be the duty of the United States to search the world to succor distressed communities ; but it is the duty of the American Government to secure its own citizens against unjust confinement, to prevent the seizure and sale of their property under illegal processes, to uphold the flag of their country against foreign orders or efforts to strike it down ; and all this the Bainbridge party not only failed to do, but absolutely worked against. They not only allowed their countrymen to suffer, but their course encouraged the Spaniards to commit and repeat their iniquities ; and American interests were worse off than if these men had never held authority.

This very treaty had been looked so longingly by every skipper trading between American and Cuban ports. These hard-worked men had complained daily and hourly at the consulates of the outrages of Spain. They had built great hopes upon this negotiation ; but they now declared that they suffered more than ever. The officials of Cuba were encouraged in their exactions by the neglect to notice those exactions in a treaty of such pretension at this emergency. This treaty, not only the American merchants in Cuba, but all those at home trading with Cuba, had expected would aid and support them. This treaty, the men who for years had contended against prodigious difficulties, in order to sustain American steamer lines, had hoped would come to their assistance ; but all alike were stricken by the hand that should have sustained them.

After the interview with his father, Bainbridge had a conference with Go-Bright, and inquired if Fisher could not be induced to resign. The clerk had been

in Washington all the while. He had been shown the incriminations of Ernest, and was becoming nervous about his fate. Go-Bright was very willing to throw him over, and advised him to quietly drop out of notice for a while, and be rewarded with a better post when this whole matter had been forgotten. But Fisher knew his advantages, and utterly refused to abandon them. He had, besides, not learned to put too much trust in potentates. He declared he must be supported and protected. He had worked and suffered for the government, and the government must save him now.

"Others get all the reward," he said, "and I nothing but the blame. The division is not fair. I had rather make overtures to Ernest than be ruined altogether."

The remark was understood and reported, and it was sufficient. Fisher was informed that he would be upheld.

The Assistant Secretary, however, although he had been so bold with his father, had his moments of depression, and then Go-Bright did his best to infuse encouragement. The chief of the bureaux had been longer in official life than his master; he had seen too many subordinates stricken down by the hand of authority to suppose that Ernest could hold out long. He knew how hard it is for one man, even in the right, to fight a government; what hosts of interested adherents rally to trample on the offender. He knew how subordinates almost always yield rather than resign. So he insisted that the only way to treat this refractory servant was to push him to the wall. He set all this before Bainbridge, and under his judicious treatment the young man recovered his tone. They were forced for a time to submit to the decision of Littleton, but

Go-Bright predicted that the Secretary would eventually come over to their opinion.

Go-Bright was right. The views of the Consul-General were in no way modified by the sweet words with which the Department sought to cover up offensive deeds. Ernest now appealed direct to the President, and wrote a formal letter reciting in detail the acts of Fisher and Bainbridge—the corruption of one, the connivance of the other, and the simultaneous negotiation of an improper treaty—and called upon the chief of the nation to determine whether these proceedings were connected as well as coincident.

The President had already consulted Littleton in regard to the preceding letter, and the Secretary, imitating Bainbridge in the earlier stages of the game, belittled the matter. Ernest thought too much of himself—he was dissatisfied with his post and with what had been done for him. He forgot that it was not his personal friends who were in power, and acted as if he thought himself behind the throne. And the President naturally accepted the explanations of his minister and forgot the affair.

Now, however, came direct and personal appeals to himself, followed up by a telegram inquiring if the letter had been received. The matter was becoming serious. He showed the letter to Littleton. The Secretary was angry, but hardly surprised. He had known it must come to this, and had prepared himself; still it was mortifying to be reported to his superior, like an ordinary offender. But he had been long in official life, and was used to unpleasant emergencies.

"I supposed you would receive something of this sort, Mr. President," he said, returning the letter. "Er-

nest is determined to make himself prominent. He overrates his own consequence and his little affairs. There is absolutely nothing in this matter. The corruptions he speaks of are capable of easy explanation or apology; they are slight peccadilloes not worth making all this ado about; nothing more than is occurring constantly in many quarters. The government could not be carried on that stopped to consider matters of this sort."

"But what does he mean by his reference to the treaty? Why was it concealed from him?"

"Mr. President," replied the minister with dignity, "I really do not think it necessary to report to a consul-general the details of a treaty before it is made known to him; it is enough for him to carry out the instructions he receives. You know the treaty. It has been laid before the Senate. It has been printed in the Congressional documents. That is enough, surely. Ernest did lay some views before me about extending trade and inviting capital to Cuba; but I am not in favor of capital going out of the country. We want it all at home."

This political economy seemed excellent to the President, who to the last was more at home in matters of etiquette and political sleight of hand than with enlarged national policies. He nodded his head, and the Secretary, perceiving his advantage, continued:

"As to the trumpery insinuations against my son, I presume our family name is a sufficient answer to them. But if you wish, Mr. President, to choose between a consul-general and a Cabinet minister, my resignation is at your disposal."

The President opened his eyes, and hardly knew

whether to be amused or amazed. But the Secretary had been diplomatic. He had made his superior understand that although he considered this whole matter an impertinence, if it proceeded further he should resent it, and absolutely refuse explanation. As to his resignation, he knew perfectly well that was not to be thought of. Had every accusation been triumphantly proven, the President must have stood by his Cabinet Minister. The downfall of one would have been the defeat of the other.

The President merely waved his hand, as if to dispel the notion of such a possibility as a resignation; and yet he was disturbed. The Presidential nominations were near. An accusation of this sort against his administration was more than unpleasant, it was alarming.

"What do you propose to do, Mr. Secretary?"

Littleton was taken aback; he supposed he had settled the entire affair, and had not calculated sufficiently on the natural selfishness of humanity. But in the President's estimation, grave interests were at stake, and he looked fixedly, awaiting an answer.

Littleton considered. He never moved rapidly; and it was some time before he answered. At last he said: "I think the wisest policy is silence. We give these accusations importance by noticing them. Ernest is out of the country, and will remain there. The only possibility of his doing harm will be at the Convention at Chicago. After you are once nominated, all Republicans must support you; and whatever is said against your ministers will be considered a campaign story. We can protract explanations and muzzle this fellow, at least until June, and then dismiss him. His outcry then will be the malice of an expelled subordinate."

"If you can succeed in calming him, it will be well. But above all things let there be no open scandals now. Pacify him if you can—at least until June."

"I will stifle him in one way or another, Mr. President;" and the Cabinet Minister took his leave.

The President, however, was far from satisfied, and talked with Adelaide on the subject. He was extremely eager for his nomination, and as an old worker in political campaigns, he knew the influence an attack like this might have at a critical moment.

Adelaide listened with a double interest, for her husband and her former lover. She was of course anxious for an extension of her term of queendom, and had become by this time something of a politician, learning some of her husband's arts, imbibing naturally some of his notions, and contracting some of his habits of thought. She felt the possibility of injury from the story of a treaty which ignored or bartered away American interests. Her first instinct was womanly—it was to cajole the enemy.

"Can we not invite him here and make much of him?" she said. "How would it do to write him a letter yourself? You used to know him in old days. Say you would like to consult with him. Ask him to stay with us."

"No; that would hardly do," said the President, "after he has made such charges as these. Littleton wouldn't stand it."

"Well, order him to Washington, and leave him to me! He likes the vanities of this wicked world. A dinner or a drive might go far to dissipate his indignation. I do think he has been managed badly. They should have done abundance of small things for him,

and left him out in the large ones. But to hurt him in both great and small was bad play."

"So I say," said the President. "They ought to have consulted me before. Neither of these men has any shrewdness. 'Tis too late, however, now to make great amends. And I am afraid to order him here. If he should not prove complaisant, he would be more dangerous than in Havana. I think, on the whole, he had better be kept away. But Bainbridge must yield a little; send him a clerk——"

"In Heaven's name send him a dozen," said Adelaide. "Do a hundred things for him rather than have him thundering in the newspapers."

"He can't write to the newspapers, thank Heaven!" said the President. "He is in office, and he knows the official rules and observes them."

"Then, by all means, keep him where he is, but certainly do nothing to increase his anger. Propitiate him a little, if possible."

"I will talk to Bainbridge myself," said the President. Adelaide had determined to do the same thing, but she did not announce her intention.

But before the policy of the administration could be carried out, the President received a telegram from Ernest, requesting to be ordered to Washington to substantiate his accusations. The President was frightened. It was within six weeks of the nominations. If this fellow could not be silenced it might become necessary to find a scapegoat. The cause of all the trouble was Bainbridge. He had made the treaty. He had screened the clerk. It was true he was Adelaide's friend, but that ought not to save him if he stood in her husband's way. He began to think it

would be well for Bainbridge to resign to avoid an investigation, and he said so. But Adelaide was up in arms.

"What good would that do? The investigation would go on."

"Yes, but it would show that I countenanced nothing that was wrong."

"There has been nothing wrong."

"There may as well have been, so far as I am concerned. If these accusations are heralded over the country between now and June, it matters very little what has really been done, and you may bid good-bye to your greatness. For our—your sake, I may be compelled to take some step that I greatly dislike."

She condescended to caress him.

"For my sake do nothing till I have a talk with Bainbridge. Let me learn what he has to say. You need not answer this telegram to-day."

"No, but it must be answered soon. Silence itself is suspicious now."

"Will you wait a day—for me?"

"Yes."

"You will not be sorry, I am sure."

She sent a note at once to Bainbridge, asking him to come immediately to her, and in ten minutes he was with her alone, for the first time since her marriage, now more than a year. Her regard for him had not abated, although it was changed. She had tasted and relished all the grandeur of her position; she had filled her rôle, had received all that for which she had bartered her happiness, and she still knew that her happiness was gone. Her beauty had not waned, for pride had kept her up; her spirit and bearing were as superb

and imposing as ever; she had not aged; and yet there was a touch of something in look and manner that betrayed she was not satisfied. She knew what it was. She knew that the same ardent passion that once consumed her against her will, raged at her heart as wildly as ever. And now, its object was in danger. It was for her to save him and shield him at every cost. What he had done she cared not. If it had been murder, it would have been all the same to her. She would have loved him even more, not because of the crime, but because of his suffering from the result; because he needed sympathy and support. When he entered, she looked at him almost wildly.

He had changed entirely. His passion was dried up, stamped out; the interest of his new position, and particularly of his recent career, had completely filled its place. His nature was not large enough for two emotions at once, and ambition, or something like it, had grown up. His intellectual qualities had also been developed in a degree, by exercise, by contact with men of ability, and practice in wider fields. He was still far from great, or even able; he blundered incessantly; but the intense situations into which he had of late been thrown, made him a different man from the one she had known. He was stronger, harsher, keener; and he was in a tremendous crisis.

He knew of the telegram the President had received, and that this was the hour in which he might be ruined. He knew, of course, why Adelaide had sent for him, and he expected aid. He had no false pride to make him reject it. He was willing to avail himself of her assistance in the sphere she had reached by her falsehood to himself.

So they met—the woman, willing to do wrong, to save or serve the man; he, willing to accept shame, to be served. Each fathomed the other. She knew his meanness, and, greatest triumph of all for her passion, loved him even in that meanness. He knew her love, and, greatest meanness of all, stooped to avail himself of the love, and of the price she had received for discarding it.

She made no pretence of formality, but went straight up to him, and seized his hands. "What is it? What can I do? What do you want done? Sit down and tell me."

He sat beside her on the sofa, and she was thrilled even then by his close presence, although she saw and felt that he was cold. "But 'tis my fault, and my punishment," she thought; "he is cold because I killed his flame. All the more need for me to do what I can for the man I have turned to stone."

"I don't know what to tell you," he said; "I suppose you know all."

"I know that you have made a treaty that this man says is bad, and that you have screened another man who he says is wicked."

"Well! I made the treaty, and I support the man."

"Why do you support the man? Can you tell me? Will you?"

"There are a thousand reasons in politics why we cannot discharge men we do not respect," he said. "This man served me, and I cannot desert him."

"That is noble, but do not let your magnanimity——"

He laughed outright, even in that moment, at the idea of his being magnanimous; and she went on. "I do

not care what your reason is. What I want is to serve you. I only want to know whether the reason can be combated."

"No—no—no," he replied; "and I cannot go into details. There is nothing to explain, nothing to palliate. The facts are that I made the treaty, and that I won't, I can't give up the man."

"Are you afraid of an investigation?"

"I don't want it. You know what that means—a horrid scandal; an accusation which half the world believes, or pretends to believe, no matter what the real verdict. It will injure the President as much as it will me."

"Bainbridge! the President is really anxious. Indeed—indeed"—and she tried hard to save his feelings—"he talks of requesting you to resign."

"That will be damaging to him," he said.

"But he thinks it exonerates him. Tell me how I can help you."

They discussed the matter long. He told her what he thought was necessary, but she cared for no details now, only to get him free from danger. All her womanly keenness, all her intellectual talent was brought to bear, sharpened by her apprehensions for him, and by her own anxiety, which now and then came up, but only rarely, for her own place and her husband's. The man was worth little in the discussion; the situation rather dulled his wits. He never came out strong in an emergency. He could sometimes prepare himself in advance, but he had not a spark of that genius that comes suddenly to brilliant men when they most require it. He had, however, a stolid, sullen determination, which sometimes stands in stead of finer qualities.

He had no acute perceptions to tell him what to do—how to get out of his predicament—but he could stand still and fight. He felt a dull but steady instinct that his policy was silence—always, everywhere: to the woman who still loved him, as he knew full well; to his father, to the President, to the world—to Ernest. He thought and said that all they had to do was—nothing: not to answer the telegram; not to allow the man to come; not to reply to his despatches; keep him in Cuba; and go on as if nothing had happened.

Sometimes the apathetic stupor of a dull-witted man answers better than the agony of achievement of a keen one, and Adelaide perceived that what he suggested was the best, because the only possible, policy. But how to induce her husband to adopt it. She must, whether she knew how, or not; and she promised Bainbridge that she would.

That night there was a dinner for forty at the Executive Mansion. Adelaide looked her best. She went through all the forms with stately grace, and entertained her guests more brilliantly than ever before. She had said no word to her husband about Bainbridge, but he noticed her unusual spirit, and supposed she had heard something that augured well. Each was impatient for the close of the evening, for the President wanted to learn her discoveries and relieve his own anxieties; while she, feeling the power of her passion, was eager to exert it while the spell was strong.

As soon as the last guest had left she went up to her husband, as he stood under the great chandelier at the centre of the East Room. The immense apartment was ablaze with light, and still warm from the presence of the recent company; redolent with perfume, and brill-

iant with the color of flowers and ornaments. Adelaide was dressed in white satin, with tiara and necklace and bracelets of diamonds; she fairly blazed with the jewels, which set off her sumptuous bosom and arms, and added to the lustre of her eyes and the glow of her complexion. There was no other ornament: not a flower, nor a bit of lace on her gown.

"I want a favor of you," she said at once.

He saw what was coming. There was that tenseness of manner which betokens great feeling. Her voice did not tremble, but it was full of passion; her lip did not quiver, nor her eye blench—both were firm and grand.

She asked for a favor like one who gives a command, and she spoke to the equal of monarchs.

"Is it about Bainbridge?"

"Yes. He must not be asked to resign."

"I do not know what else is to be done."

"I do not care; but this you must do for me, Albert! There must be no mincing now. You know I gave up this man for you. I must save him."

"Why are you so anxious? Do you care for him still?"

"I am true to you; but I will save him."

"There has been a second appeal from Ernest to-day. He has offered his resignation unless he is allowed to return."

"You must not accept his resignation. Keep him there."

"What good will that do? If Bainbridge has done wrong, it must come out. But if he resigns, Ernest may be satisfied."

"Bainbridge must not be stricken by my husband. I tell you, Mr. President"—and she drew herself up

proudly, and her eyes blazed with a tremendous power he had never seen in them before—"you must save him." Then, suddenly, with voice and features full of tenderness—"Will you?"

He was about to approach her, but she drew off. "Will you save him?"

"Adelaide! I cannot. If I retain him, it may be my—your destruction. We may lose all."

"I had rather lose all than that he should be sacrificed."

"Then you prefer him to me."

"I have not said so. I do not say so. I am your true and loyal wife;" and as he moved away in an agony of fear and anxiety, she followed him. They paced up and down the long and lofty hall, he in advance, and she sweeping after him in her gleaming robes—appealing, urging, not imploring—until finally, she stopped and exclaimed, "Albert, listen to me. If you destroy that man, I will leave you, I will disgrace you. I am capable of everything. You shall not have your will by crushing him. You will go down yourself in the fall. Your selfishness will not save you. The President who has this scandal about him that I will make about you will never spend a second term in these halls. Take your last look at them and at me."

He stopped short, stunned and amazed at the importunities, which were almost imprecations. He saw that she was wrought up to a pitch that made her indeed capable of all she had threatened. He feared her, and he loved her—and he yielded. Bainbridge was saved.

As soon as it was decided to screen Bainbridge, it became indispensable to crush Ernest. Not only was

it agreed that no notice should be taken of his accusations, but everything possible was to be done to depreciate his services and disparage his character. But before this policy could be fairly initiated, Ernest sent in his resignation, to take effect immediately, unless he could be ordered to Washington to substantiate his charges. This demand it was necessary to notice; yet it was most undesirable to allow him to return on the eve of a Presidential nomination, with his budget full of discoveries. So the Secretary of State replied to his first application, as if the second had not been received: "The President directs me to say that it is not advisable to order you to Washington, as your services are required at Havana." This, it was thought, would silence him for a while; but Ernest immediately replied: "I request you to say to the President that I am unwilling to serve under a Department whose policy I disapprove, and which I consider has treated me with injustice and indignity." Even this was left unanswered, until, detecting the design, Ernest telegraphed again directly to the President: "I shall appeal to the people to-morrow, unless I hear from you." If he should appeal to the people, unpleasant consequences might ensue, especially if the government were placed in the attitude of retaining him against his will where he could not testify. So his resignation was accepted within twenty-four hours, and he turned over his office to a subordinate and sailed by the next steamer for New York.

But it was now time to strike hard; and on the day when his resignation was accepted, while he was still out of the country and unable to reply, notice was given to the newspapers that he was short in his accounts, a

statement absolutely false. But a letter, eight months old, addressed to him by the Comptroller on the subject of a disputed claim, was raked up at the Treasury, and published with the declaration that, though Ernest had been repeatedly called upon to make good a deficit, he had failed to reply. Nevertheless, the whole subject had been reopened and reconsidered, by the express direction of both the Secretary of the Treasury and the Comptroller, and remains undecided to this day. This was the first open blow dealt by the Bainbridge party at their whilom subordinate.

Ernest arrived, and in a week published charges against the State Department itself, of screening corruption, of neglecting American interests, and negotiating a dishonorable and injurious treaty with Spain; challenging the government to publish every despatch that had passed between himself and the Department, to prove or disprove his assertions. But the government did nothing of the sort. Instead, there was instantly published a forged letter from the Comptroller, calling for moneys said to be due by Ernest—a letter which had never been written—together with further false allegations in regard to his accounts. This was the second time that this weapon of irrelevant falsification was employed in reply to a man who had charged the Department with grave misdeeds, which he offered to prove.

Now, however, the Bainbridge party was greatly alarmed, for forty newspapers took up the accusations of Ernest at this most critical juncture in the history of the President. The consul continued his fire of letters to the press, and published, besides, a pamphlet, which was laid on the table of every senator and representa-

tive in Congress, as well as of other prominent men throughout the country. The shots went home, and a conference was held to determine the best way of meeting the assault. It was resolved, as before, to say nothing in reply: to publish no despatch, to pay no attention to the accusations, and to notify all republicans, whether friends of the President or no, that a congressional investigation must not be held; as, whatever the result, the fact would be damaging to the party in the elections.

But the charges took effect all the same. Along with other grave objections to the course of the State Department, and to the tactics and deportment of the President, they contributed to the defeat of Albert at the Chicago convention. The nation, indeed, was especially tired of the do-nothing and pusillanimous policy of the State Department; it wanted American citizens protected abroad as well as at home, and American interests fostered; and no one thing contributed more to the preference for Albert's successful competitor than the belief that he would overturn the Littleton dynasty, and substitute for ignominious indifference in foreign affairs, a manly and vigorous assertion of the American name, a proper and honorable guardianship, and, if need be, defence, of American interests.

Meanwhile Ernest resorted to other means to unveil to the country the proceedings which had been so carefully concealed. He gave to the world a fictitious narrative, describing many of the recognized traits of public characters, and setting forth many circumstances which had actually occurred; but adding to the portraits features drawn from his own imagination, and to the story incidents which, it was manifest, were unreal;

but the whole calculated to draw attention to the condition of Cuba, to its relations with the United States, and especially to the course of the State Department in deliberately and persistently ignoring corruption, and simultaneously negotiating an improper treaty with Spain. This narrative found many readers, and made many anxious to know more. The result was a complete disclosure of the conduct of the Department, a merited and absolute disapproval and rebuke of its action as unworthy of the government and the nation, and a general feeling of relief on the 4th of March that the country was well rid of inefficiency, indolence, the rule of subordinates, and the protection of those who were worse than incapable. For this result, Ernest was content to have suffered long, so as to be finally vindicated, and to have contributed, in whatever degree, to the exposure of injustice and wrong-doing in high place, and to the punishment of those who prostituted great office for private interests, or personal vanity, or revenge.

CHAPTER XX.

DELIVERANCE.

CARLOS remained ill for a month. The change of apartments, the physicians said, had saved his life; had he been kept in the noisome cell where he first was placed, he could not possibly have recovered. But even under more favoring circumstances the balance was held long. The heats of the approaching summer had begun, and he had lived so long in northern climates, that he felt the tropical influences keenly. It was weeks before he began to mend. Catalina bore the confinement bravely. Her father, as well as the condesa, was permitted to see her; the marquesa kept her word, and paid frequent visits, and Ramon comforted her daily. For the time, of course, all thought of escape had been abandoned.

One afternoon, when Carlos was near his recovery, Catalina sat by his bedside, and the lad asked her when she had heard from Aguero.

"Dear Carlos, are you really well enough to listen and to talk?"

"Yes, Catalina; my head is clear. Let me know."

The girl then told him she had received messages almost daily from the chief, who was ready to aid in the escape as soon as Carlos should be sufficiently recovered. "When, dearest, will you be strong enough to

walk? Whenever you can walk to the shore, Agüero and Don Ramon will arrange the rest."

"In a week or two, sister," said the lad, his eye brightening at the thought of rescue. "How good you all are! Not only you, Catalina, for that does not surprise me. I knew, of course, you would do all in your power for me; but the others, my chief, and Ramon, who is a Spanish officer, and must risk more than any one else to save me—more, even, than life."

"Yes," said his sister, faintly, willing to dismiss the theme.

"Ah! Catalina, he is devoted to you as well as to me. He deserves whatever you can give him in return."

"Hush! dear Carlos; let us not think of this. Arriete is good and noble and true indeed, and I appreciate it all."

Just then Ramon himself entered with a messenger from the condesa, bringing wine and fruit for the sick man.

"Dear Ramon," said Carlos, "I have been telling Catalina of my gratitude to you. She has said once more how willing you are to aid me——"

But Catalina laid her finger on his lips, and turning to Arriete, said: "I beg you will not excite him; he is not strong enough yet to bear it." And the youth, who never transgressed a wish of Catalina, obeyed.

It was two weeks after this, and nearly two months from the beginning of this story, before the conspirators were able fully to arrange their plans. Then Catalina, Ramon, and finally Carlos, determined that there was no time to lose. They took the condesa into their councils, and she sent word to Agüero that events

seemed ripe. There was no hope from the United States ; but Carlos was well and strong enough, and whenever arrangements could be made he would be ready. Catalina, accordingly, bade her brother good-bye, and returned to her father's house. Carlos was sent back to his cell, Ramon still visiting him daily, and the condesa again notified Aguero. The bandit came into town as La Campa, and visited the Casa Cordoba.

The condesa left him alone with Catalina. It was the first time they had spoken to each other since the visit to Espiritu Santo.

"Señorita," said the bandit, "I cannot tell you how rejoiced I am that your brother is nearly well. Has he been very ill?"

"Yes, señor ; very ill. At times I feared he would not recover ; but the Virgin and the Saints have heard my prayers."

"And can we now believe he is ready to make the effort to escape?"

"Yes ; I believe he is now quite strong. Can you possibly see Don Ramon?"

They both looked away when she spoke of Arriete ; neither wished to meet the other's eye.

"Yes, if you will send him to me ; or, if necessary, I will go to him."

"No ; no, indeed. His rooms are at the palace. You must not go to him there. Where can he find you ? I am sure he will go."

"I am to stay here, with our Aunt Cordoba."

"Then to-day, when I go to the Morro, I will tell him to come to you."

"That is good," said Aguero ; "for we must arrange

our plans together. You, señorita, should be present, and the condesa too; so that we may all be prepared for any emergency."

Accordingly, on the morrow, Ramon came as if to visit the condesa and Catalina, and Don Juan de la Campa, being in the house, was naturally present at the interview. All was planned for the next day—a Friday in May. There would be no moon; and Catalina was to take a captain's uniform, which Don Ramon would procure. This was to be left with Carlos. Later, Ramon would visit the prison and leave the key unturned. At about eleven o'clock he would walk again to the entrance of the cell, and at a signal that all was clear, Carlos would come out. The two were to walk together past the guards, down the inclined way, and then pass over the broken ground north of the castle, to the shore, where Aguero would be in waiting with a small boat, to take them off.

The afternoon came on which so much depended. Catalina packed the uniform, and bade her aunt good-bye, both women trembling, for though they were heroines, they were women. They could do the deed, but they felt all the anxiety; just as the bravest soldiers are they who are most afraid, but conquer their fear. Those who have no fear, have no conquest of fear.

Arriete escorted his mistress as usual, but in a separate boat, and as they passed up the inclined road to the entrance to the Morro, Catalina thought: "By this road my brother will walk to his freedom." She held her precious basket close, lest some peering sentinel should insist on learning its contents; and it almost seemed to her that every one must know she was con-

spiring to rescue a prisoner. But no one stopped her; no one examined her basket, escorted, as she was, by the aide-de-camp of the Captain-General; and they arrived at the cell. Carlos was calm, but pale: he had nearly recovered from his illness, and could walk without any indication of feebleness; but his face still showed the effects of confinement and disease.

Catalina remained the usual time, so as to attract no attention, though it seemed to her that if she left earlier, the escape would be more certain—that part of the scheme would be accomplished. But at last it was time. Arriete came to tell her that the hour had come.

"Dear Carlos," said the girl, her womanly tears coming quick at the presence of an emergency—"Carlos, what can I say? Dear boy! I love you." And then, laughing hysterically amid her tears—"As if I needed to say that to you! But it is all I can say. When shall we see each other again! God and His Saints bless and preserve you!" And she left, not trusting herself to utter another word.

Arriete escorted her to the Casa Cordoba, where Aguero was in waiting. Then there was another consultation. The bandit was informed that all was arranged. He, on his part, undertook to be ready with his boat at the shore north of the castle, at any time after eleven. The watchword was agreed on. The two, Carlos and Ramon, were to be received: one, to be rescued; the other, to— No one said the word. The hardest part in all the scheme, they all felt, was Ramon's. He was a man of honor, and they all knew what honor means.

Catalina, at last, could not contain herself.

"Don Ramon," she said, "will you come into this room? I must say something to you."

The condesa, who had never broached to her niece the subject that was in all their thoughts, wondered, and Aguero was immensely excited. Ramon, of course, followed Catalina. As soon as they were alone the girl turned to him, and exclaimed: "Don Ramon, you are doing everything for Carlos, and for me; and I have promised you everything; but I must also tell you everything."

The young man came close, half in hope, but somewhat more than half in fear; for there was something in her tone and air that betrayed her emotion.

"What is it, Catalina?" he asked, anxiously.

"Ramon, dear Ramon, I cannot deceive you; I cannot let you do what you are doing, in ignorance of my feeling. Oh, Ramon, I love Aguero. I have never said so to him, though he has pledged himself to me. I have told you more than he knows. But you are so good, so noble, so unselfish, that even for Carlos I cannot betray you. I never can give you my love. I cannot be to you what you want."

At the look of horror and pain that came over him she was shocked, but continued: "I will keep my word—I will be your wife. I have bought my brother, and I will pay the price. I should have told you before, I know I should; but I hoped to be a good and loyal wife; and so I will; I will, Ramon; but I cannot let you do what you are doing in ignorance of my real feeling. Forgive me, I have been guilty, I am ashamed;" and she sank, crushed, almost at his feet.

The youth had been stunned indeed. He had known, for who does not know, under such circumstances,

something of the truth—a part of it? He had felt that Catalina did not return all his ardor, but he hoped in time to awaken a responsive feeling. He had been willing to wait, to be patient. He had feared at times that Agüero was more interesting to her than himself, but he had put aside the thought. And now it was come—the certainty, the truth, the blow. He staggered under it for a moment, but then cried out: “Señorita, not for this will I break my vow, nor derange our plan. I love you with all the fervor and constancy of which I am capable; and I will serve you, and your brother, my friend. Put all other thoughts aside. Now we must rescue him. Agüero and I will work together; and afterward, it shall be as you decide. I will ask nothing from you that you are unwilling to give. I claim no reward. What I am anxious for—what I would die for—is your unpurchased love. If you cannot give me that, bestow it where you will; but let me always serve you and love you, though you do not love me.”

“Ramon, Ramon,” sobbed the girl, almost conquered by his magnanimity, “I do love you; more than I love Carlos; only less than I love——” She stammered and did not say the word, for his sake and her own; his agony, her maiden shame. “Dear Ramon, you are too noble. It is not my fault.”

“I know it, Catalina,” he replied, controlling his emotion. “In these matters we are not masters of ourselves. But now we have no time to lose. Let us go back.”

He was repressed and calm. But she came up to him, her long hair streaming, her eyes yet filled with tears, and said: “Ramon—once;” and flung herself

into his arms. "God bless you. God reward you. God forgive me."

He held her for one moment pressed against his heart, and felt the responsive throbbings of her bosom, till he knew that this way madness lay; and then himself unclasped her arms, kissed her only once, warmly, but purely and sadly, on the lips, which she did not refuse; then led her gently to a couch, and waited till she was calm. In a moment or two they rejoined the others, and from this time Ramon knew that Catalina de Casa-Nueva never would be his bride.

Aguero received only a glance and a pressure of the hand, but something in Catalina's manner, saddened and subdued, as well as in Arriete's air, made him confident. He promised to be in waiting, and the two young men departed. Catalina returned to her chamber; for it is the part of women in this life, in the greatest emergencies, not to do, but to wait. So she and the condesa waited. The old noblewoman was nearly seventy, and had learned her task after many an effort; but the younger creole had the impulsiveness of her race, and for her the duty was harder. All the same, Catalina waited.

Carlos delayed until night had absolutely fallen, but about nine o'clock he clad himself in the uniform of a Spanish soldier, and then threw himself on his cot until Ramon should come. Shortly before ten, Arriete arrived, unaccompanied. He went in and found his friend, and in the darkness handed him a machete and a pistol, for they knew not what need might arise for either, and when men attempt to escape from Spanish prisons they must be prepared. Then, after a few words of explanation and arrangement, Arriete, full of

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the emotions of the past few hours, flung his arms around the neck of Carlos, and hugged him closely. The boy returned the embrace, and said: "I know, Ramon, all that you are doing for me. I hope you will be rewarded."

"I ask no reward," said the other, almost coldly. "I mean to save my friend."

Carlos did not understand. He felt that there was some difficulty, some misapprehension; but at this moment he could ask no explanation, and he simply replied: "God bless you. I thank you. My sister thanks you, dear Ramon."

"When you hear my whistle," said the other, "it is the signal for you to come out promptly. I shall be at the bastion in front of the gate, near the great gun facing the city. Come to me directly, as if you expected to meet me. The key will be unturned. Open promptly, and do not try it in advance; there may be a sentinel near who would hear you."

"I understand."

"Till ten."

The time seemed long to the prisoner, as he paced up and down in the darkness, keeping as far as possible from the entrance, lest a gleam of light might fall upon his uniform. But the night was favorable. They had, of course, selected one without a moon, and the clouds were heavy, obscuring the stars, which in that latitude emit a brilliancy almost equal to that of the nearer luminary. A "norther"—as the Cubans call a heavy storm of wind and rain that sweeps down on them once or twice a month—was approaching, and still further favored the designs of the conspirators. The great masses of cloud came rapidly close, enveloping the

Morro, and eclipsing the artificial lights of the city and the forts; while half an hour before the time of the rendezvous a light rain began to fall. These rains and the consequent chills are felt very acutely by those accustomed only to a tropical temperature, and the sentinels were less brisk and on the alert than usual. When Arriete walked around the rampart leisurely, he observed that the guards were shivering in the unfamiliar breeze, and peering into the northern sky as if in hope the tempest would not break till their rounds were over. He spoke to one or two of them: "The norther is near."

"Yes, señor; before midnight it will be upon us."

Then moving slowly, he approached the door of the cell, and placing the key in the lock with ease, so as not to seem anxious to one who might chance to be looking on, and yet to awake no attention by the act itself, he opened the grating, and entered.

"Are you ready, Carlos?" he whispered.

"Is it you, Ramon?"

"Yes, my boy, I am here for you. There was no one near, and I entered. Have you pistol and machete ready?"

"Yes."

"Pistol loaded?"

"All ready, Ramon."

"Well, it is very dark. The sentinels are off their guard. We had best come out under cover of these clouds."

Just as he spoke a peal of thunder broke over the castle, and the lightning flashed into the cell. If the sentinel had been at the gate at that moment he must have seen the two men, in the uniform of Spanish offi-

cers, armed, and talking closely, where one should have been a prisoner in plain clothes. But no one was looking inward, and the next instant the rains fell heavily, and the winds blew across the castle walls, whistling and howling as fiercely as in colder climates.

"Now is our time," said Arriete; and they stepped out unseen, together, deviating from the plan. The sentinels were screening themselves from the gust, and paid hardly any attention to the officers, who walked fast, as if also to find shelter from the storm. They reached the entrance court, where most of the guard were lying asleep, or stretched stolidly on the floor, waiting their turn of duty; only one or two were standing. Arriete nodded to these, and gave the countersign; they knew he was the Captain-General's aide-de-camp, and the two friends passed outside; then strode rapidly, as men might under such a pelting rain, down the inclined walk, till they had nearly reached the level of the strand. A long wall follows the line of the descent as you leave the castle; it is on the north-eastern side of the slope, the farther from the bay. This wall, at first nearly forty feet high, decreases in height as the road descends, and at the bottom is only three or four feet above the ground. Beyond it, on the north, is the hill, at this point only a slight elevation, on the further side of which the ground slopes, broken and rugged, but steadily descending to the sea, not a thousand yards away; for the peninsula, jutting into the Atlantic, at the end of which the Morro stands, is narrow in the extreme. The wall we speak of is under the guns of both the Morro and the Cabaña, and amply covered from any attacking force, if such could by any possibility land and approach from the north;

but against the purpose of Ramon and Carlos it was insufficient.

In the darkness and the storm they easily clambered over it, and then, entirely unperceived, made their way up the hill, here about twenty or thirty feet high, and down again on the other side. One dazzling flash of lightning revealed them for an instant just as they reached the crest, but the sentinel was careless, or careful only to screen himself from the storm, and gave no alarm. They scrambled along over the rugged ground for half a mile, drenched by the rain that pours in the tropics as if the heavens were emptying, and sometimes beaten to the ground by the storm. They were sore with their frequent falls, and Carlos was still weak from his recent illness; their progress was slow. Before they had passed over more than half the ground between the Morro and the sea, another vivid flash of lightning disclosed a boat at the shore, which they knew must be Aguero's. But the same light that revealed the skiff to them betrayed it to an officer at the castle, more watchful than his sentinel. He gave the alarm at once, and Carlos and his companion hastened their steps, at the noise of bells, and cries, and signal musketry, indicating that they were perceived.

The darkness favored them, however. It would be impossible to pursue them with any hope of capture, and the only chance of the garrison was to sink the little craft by which they hoped to escape. After some more moments of climbing and crawling, Ramon aiding Carlos whenever he stumbled, they reached the shore, and Aguero hailed them with the appointed countersign. He sprang out of the boat to assist the fugitives. Carlos, now very weak, was absolutely carried in Ague-

ro's arms. Then the chief gave a hand to his rival; and as the two men clasped each other tightly, each thought at the moment of the woman who stood between them, though far away. Aguero aided his opponent into the skiff, and they launched out into the darkness, thinking themselves secure: Carlos was saved.

At that moment the clouds broke, and the stars shone out. The garrison on the parapet were watching, and the little craft was now in full sight from the ramparts. One or two shots were fired at them, but passed beyond; but as the vessel moved farther into the open sea, the gunners got better range, and one shot struck the sail, turning the boat almost over. The garrison saw their luck and fired again. This time suddenly came the missile of death; and while Carlos, Aguero, and Ramon sat side by side, Ramon was struck in the breast, and fell backward, covered with blood.

"My brother, my savior," cried Carlos; "are you hit for me?"

There was just light enough to see the countenance of the wounded man, who looked up at Carlos, but did not speak. He was struck in a vital part, and had already lost the strength to reply.

"Make haste, men," shouted Aguero; "make haste, and if possible we will land and save his life."

He tore his own shirt to staunch the wound; he held the fainting form in his arms, and dashed the water over his face.

"Give brandy," he said; "quick, quick."

A flask was found, and the contents poured down Ramon's throat; and under the influence he revived.

"Pull on, men, hard;" and they got out their oars, and rowed as well as sailed. Carlos dropped scalding tears on the face of his preserver, but Agüero bade him be calm, for otherwise he might injure the sufferer. So the two sat sternly, quietly, holding the man whom one had loved and the other had feared, and whom both were anxious to save. Arriete remained unconscious, or seemingly so, for an hour.

The vessel plunged into the waves, which were high from the recent storm; but the boatmen knew their craft and their route, and toward two or three o'clock Agüero bade them make for land. He had a friend on the coast, on whose estate he sometimes landed, and to this point he now directed the skiff.

The house stood in a narrow cove, only a few rods back from the shore. It was built on a bluff twenty or thirty feet high, from which the owner had constructed a pier for boating and bathing purposes. Agüero believed his friend to be at home, and as the plantation stood alone there was no danger of discovery. The master, Don Jose de Belen, was a Cuban, and though ostensibly loyal to the Spanish authorities, was in full sympathy with the brigand in politics. The boat was soon made fast to the little pier, and one of the crew was despatched to ascertain if access could be had to the house; while Agüero still held the sinking man in his arms, and Carlos watched every breathing of his friend. The rain had now ceased, but the clouds were still lowering, and the wind and the sea were high. The boat rocked and tossed violently, endangering what little chance of life was left to Ramon. The moments seemed hours in the darkness and the danger, but in reality the time was short before the messenger returned.

Don Jose was at home, and would come at once with lights and means to convey the wounded man ashore. Not many minutes elapsed before half a dozen figures were seen descending the rough road on the face of the cliff. They bore lanterns and a litter, hastily constructed out of the canvas bottom of a Cuban bed; it was swinging now like a hammock in the gale. They came out on the pier to the point where the skiff was moored.

"Aguero," cried a voice well known to the brigand; "whom have you there?"

"A friend, shot as he was escaping from the Morro. A Spanish officer who had just opened the dungeon for Don Carlos de Casa-Nueva."

"Is he much hurt?"

"I cannot absolutely say, but I fear mortally."

"Bring him to the house at once, and we will try to save him."

In a moment the litter was let down by the glimmer of the lanterns, and tenderly, very cautiously, Carlos assisting Aguero, they laid the unconscious form of him who had been the rival of one and the preserver of the other upon the swaying canvas. The movement did not rouse him from his insensible condition, and he apparently received no pain; yet once or twice Aguero hesitated in his task, when the blood seemed to flow more rapidly from the wound. Finally, the motionless but still breathing body was deposited on the litter, and carefully lifted to the pier.

After this had been accomplished, two of the crew were left in the boat, and the others assisted in carrying Arriete along the narrow pier and up the hill. Twice, though moving with the greatest care, one of the bear-

ers slipped in the darkness, and another stumbled over a stone. At last, however, the precious burden reached the summit, and then was borne easily and slowly into the house.

There were no ladies in the family, and no visitors. The negro women had prepared a room, and the wounded youth was laid quietly on a bed, where something like an examination of his hurt was made. Agüero was not without experience of this sort, and tearing open Ramon's shirt, he discovered a ghastly wound. The right breast was completely shattered and the lung exposed; and the chief declared that Ramon could not possibly live more than eight-and-forty hours.

At this announcement Carlos shuddered and turned deadly pale, but made a violent effort and controlled himself, for he knew there might be need of his services. Agüero at once gave orders for stimulants, as well as for water and linen to wash and bind the wound; and a messenger was despatched to Matanzas, for the nearest surgical aid.

When brandy had been administered, Arriete fetched a heavy sigh, and for the first time opened his eyes. A nervous shiver passed over him, and he was about to speak, but Agüero hastily exclaimed: "Be very quiet, Don Ramon; your life is at stake. Say not a word while I try to dress your wound. Then we will talk to you."

Arriete rolled his eyes, and caught sight of Carlos, who was bending over him. They exchanged looks, the one of affection not unmixed with pride, and the other of intense anxiety and passionate gratitude.

Carlos exclaimed: "Dear Ramon, obey Agüero, I

implore you. Say not a word until he allows ;" and Arriete obeyed.

There was little, apparently, to do but bathe and staunch the wound, and cover it gently, till a surgeon could arrive, but the bleeding speedily became less, and soon ceased altogether. Agüero, however, dared not attempt any delicate surgery. In half an hour the patient was calm, and the chief allowed Carlos to speak to his friend.

"Dear, dear Ramon, you are suffering this for me."

"I do not regret it, Carlos ; I would do the same to-morrow, if it were to be done again. But tell me, is there any chance of recovery ? I see by your looks there is none. I thought not. How long have I to live ? I must know ;" and as Carlos hesitated—"I ask you by your love for me to tell me truly."

Carlos at this adjuration turned to Agüero, who gave him with a glance permission to speak, and the younger man attempted to answer, but utterly failed. He burst into a passion of sobs and left the room ; and Ramon appealed to his rival.

"You will tell me, Agüero. How long have I to live ?"

"My friend," said Agüero ; "if you really wish to know the truth, I will not deceive you. I do not think it possible that you can live two days. But we have already sent for surgeons, and the best skill in Cuba will soon be here."

"It will be of no use," said Arriete ; "I feel that I shall not survive. But Carlos Agüero," he continued, solemnly, "I want you to do one thing for me. The Doña Catalina has told me of your feeling for her." Here he paused, and the astonished

brigand could hardly believe he heard aright. "Yes," continued Ramon, "although she was pledged to me if I saved her brother—she told me only yesterday—that—it was you whom she really loved." It cost him a bitter pang to say the words, and the brigand's emotion was equal to his own. He turned pale, and trembled as he hung over the dying man; and great drops of sweat broke out upon his forehead. He said not a word, however, but glared with an anxiety stronger than any words, while Ramon went on:

"She released me from my promise, for she declared she could not allow me to enter upon my task ignorant of her real feeling. I was shocked, but of course I told her I should persist in saving Carlos; and then, if she could not love me—I would make no claim for what was not hers to give. All is over for me now, Aguero. I shall trouble neither you nor Catalina. But, let me see her once more. Can you not bring her to me? She will come with you, if she knows I wish it. Bring her, and let me myself resign her to you. You will have her for a lifetime; let me have her presence for one short hour. You will not refuse a dying man."

The chief was inexpressibly moved. To be told by his rival, him whom he had thought his successful rival, that Catalina in reality loved himself—that she could not keep her word with Ramon because of that love; to be told it as Ramon lay dying before him—was in itself enough to affect the sternest man; but to be asked to bring his mistress to the bedside of this rival was an addition to his excitement that stirred his whole nature to its depths. He did not hesitate a moment, but exclaimed: "I will go, Ramon"—for he

could call this man by no more formal name—"I will go myself, and bring her to you. She will come, at your bidding. You shall see her. I promise you;" and with heroic magnanimity, "her coming may restore you."

"No, Agüero, there is no hope of that; no fear of it for you. I am past all cure. And why should I live when she loves another?" The thought was a deeper anguish to him than his wound.

"Be calm, my friend," said the bandit. "You must be calm from this moment until she arrives, or perhaps you may not then be able to receive her."

"I understand you; I may not live to receive her. But I feel that I am to see her once again."

Agüero left him for a moment, and informed Carlos of the extraordinary interview that had occurred. Carlos of course was greatly agitated at the revelation, but agreed that Agüero should start at once, and induce Catalina to come out with the condesa and his father. The journey could be made without suspicion, for Belen was an acquaintance of the family; and in Havana Agüero was still known only as La Campa. There might be, there was, some risk for the chief, but this he thought nothing of. His whole life was full of risks, and every danger he was willing to incur, or even to seek, if he could soothe or gratify the heroic sufferer. He put away all thought of his own emotion, and tried to fancy that he was no more ready to go because he knew of Catalina's real feeling; but poor human nature will assert itself, and doubtless this knowledge had its share in his willingness.

The preparations were speedily made. He was to ride to a railroad station five miles away, and there take the

train, which, in this tropical climate, started at sunrise. There was little time to lose. He went into Arriete's chamber for a moment, and, bending over him, touched his forehead lightly with his hand. He felt like kissing the sufferer, but forbore; for he remembered that he himself was now the successful rival, and too much show of pity might suggest unhappy thoughts to him so much in need of sympathy. Arriete opened his eyes, and in the early light, just streaming through the windows, he recognized the brigand.

"I have come," said Agüero, "to tell you that I am starting for Havana. By night Catalina will be here. Be calm and strong, and you will see her. Till then, God keep you."

"Thank you; thanks. I knew you would do this for me. Tell her I must see her to say farewell."

"I will, I will. She will come. Be sure. Carlos will not leave you a moment till I return."

And the boy came and sat by the pillow of his friend, to fan his fevered cheek and minister to the man who was dying for him.

Agüero arrived in Havana by nine, and went direct to the Casa Cordoba, where, as he expected, Catalina had remained for the night. There was no disturbance in the streets. The news of the escape had not been made known; orders were purposely given to conceal it, and though there had been some wonder at the unusual firing from the Morro, no explanation was made to the public. Thus the brigand found his way easily to the presence of his aunt. He asked to see her alone, and she, fearing bad news, did not inform Catalina of his arrival.

"What is it, Juan? What brings you here? Some-

thing terrible has happened. I see it in your look and manner. Is Carlos safe?"

"Yes, aunt, Carlos is free, and at the house of Don Jose de Belen; but Arriete is dying. They fired on the boat from the Morro, and he was struck. We carried him to Don Jose's house, and, aunt, he insists on seeing Catalina. He cannot live beyond to-morrow. He loved her. She had promised herself, as you know, to him, because of his devotion to Carlos; and yet she told him yesterday that she preferred me." He stammered at first with agitation, but then the words poured forth in a torrent, that the story might be quickly told. "The noble fellow gave her up at once, but insisted on saving Carlos. He did so at the sacrifice of life; and before he dies he must see the woman he loves, and whom I love, and whom he has sent me to bring to his side. I have come for her. Will you go with her? Will you prepare her, while I go for the conde? She will return with me, I am sure."

"Juan, what a terrible story! The poor youth! the noble youth! Catalina must go, to be sure. And I will go, of course."

Just at this moment a messenger brought a note from the Conde de Casa-Nueva to the condesa, to say that his house had been placed under guard, and that he was himself a prisoner. The Captain-General did not expect to confine him long, but deemed it wiser to take this step, as a precaution against the Volunteers. The conde thought that Catalina should remain with her aunt at present, and make no attempt to see him. Indeed, the General had informed him that any application would be useless, and in reality would complicate the situation. The conde quite concurred with this advice,

and wrote calmly. The note was open, and had passed through the Captain-General's hands.

Here was a further complication. Would Catalina consent to leave Havana, with her father in this situation? "Juan! you must see her yourself and tell her all. You must plead Arriete's cause. She will listen to you. At this moment she can refuse neither him nor you. Wait here, I will send her to you."

The old lady went to her niece, and first of all told her that Carlos had escaped, and that the rescue was known. Then she showed the note of the conde, and before the girl could recover from the shock, she told her that Agüero was in the sala with further news. This was the sole preparation the condesa gave. She thought the lover could tell his own story better than any other for him.

Catalina went into the room anxiously, already agitated by the news of her father's imprisonment, and fearful for Carlos, or of some fresh unknown calamity.

"What is it, Don Juan?" she asked, as she staggered to a chair. "What is it that the condesa will not tell me? Did Carlos escape? Is he unhurt? Why are you here?"

She had not asked for Arriete yet, and Agüero noticed it.

"Yes, señorita, Carlos is safe; but, be calm—his friend is hurt."

"Not Ramon! Hurt for Carlos! Hurt for me! Tell me more."

"They escaped to the boat, where I was waiting for them, and then the people on the Morro discovered us, and fired—and—and——"

He hesitated, and the horrified girl herself finished

the sentence—"and Ramon was struck, struck for me ! It was for me he did it. I have killed him."

"He is not dead, señorita ; not dead, but dying. We carried him to a house on the shore, and he may live till to-morrow night——"

At these words Catalina fainted outright, and would have fallen from her chair, had not Agüero caught her in his arms. It was the first time he had ever touched her form, and even at this instant a thrill of emotion rushed over his frame ; but the occasion was too sacred even for love. The imminence of something stronger than love, of death itself—the unparalleled sacrifice of Ramon, the grief and horror of Catalina—all overwhelmed and drove out every selfish thought. He dragged the girl to a table where a vase of water stood, dashed a few drops over her face, and laid her gently down as consciousness returned, that she might not at this moment wake to find herself in his arms.

She revived more quickly than he had hoped. He assisted her to rise, and at once went on : "Dear lady, listen. This man who has done so much for you—you can still do something for him. He has sent me to take you to him before he dies. He asks to see you, and I have come on this holy errand. Carlos is with him, and he waits in the hope of meeting you by night-fall. The condesa will go with you. We must start soon, or it may be too late."

The girl was dazed at the rush of terrible events. "How can I go with you, Don Juan, to the death-bed of Ramon. You are the last man to take me to him."

"No, Catalina," said he, bravely ; "I am the man to take you, for Ramon has told me all. He has repeated to me what you told him yesterday ;" and the rugged

soldier blushed more deeply than the girl before him, whose own secrets he was revealing to her.

"This is too sacred a moment for any false shame," he said—"for any concealments. This noble, dying man has bid me come for you; has told me of his own grief, and of my share in your heart. Catalina, I know you love me. I want you to go with me to Arriete. You will not refuse me now." He stood upright before her, and spoke with that air of authority which she had so often recognized.

She felt its full force now, and was calm under his influence. "I will go," she said. "You have a right to command me. But if I go—I will never return. Shall I go?" and she looked up, trembling, pale and flushed by turns, but determined.

"What do you mean?" said the brigand, hardly believing what her words implied. And then in low and unsteady tones, and leaning close: "Will you go—to be my wife? the wife of a brigand?"

"You know all," she answered firmly, for the ordinary situation was reversed; it was the woman who acted now. Her secret was disclosed under circumstances that made disclosure itself no betrayal; it was told in the awful presence of death, and she dared not deny it. She felt no shame. The whole flood of thought came over her in an instant. Her brother had escaped; Arriete was killed by the Spaniards, who had imprisoned her father. Why should she remain? Aguero had declared his own passion, and had been refused. It was now her turn. She knew, too, what Arriete meant by sending Aguero for her, and she said—not with a burst of feeling, but calmly and steadily, looking him full in the eyes—"I will go, Juan."

He clasped her once in his arms—it was not in human nature to refrain, and she did not refuse—but his own delicacy prompted him to no further embrace, and he was rewarded by a glance that told him she understood and appreciated his forbearance, that almost said to him, “Wait.” Then she turned and led him to her aunt.

The old lady was a little shocked at the result of the interview, but in times of revolution all the passions are at fever-heat, and sudden resolutions do not long seem strange. She declared, after a moment, that if these things were so she need not go with Catalina, but would remain to watch the condition of the conde. She would send for a priest, and Catalina and Aguero must be married before they left. Catalina was startled to be thus taken at her word, and Aguero seemed to lose all the boldness of a brigand—he only looked tenderly, and took Catalina’s hand. His delicacy was more successful than a greater show of passion would have been. The girl knew his wish, and, after a moment, returned his glance, then flung herself into the arms of her relative, and whispered :

“Dear aunt, am I unmaidenly?”

“No, my girl,” said the old countess, “you are not; you are a heroine. I approve of all you do. I will stay with your father, and you will see once more this poor fellow who has given life for us. Go to your room and make your preparations. And you, Juan de la Campa, be ready in an hour to claim the noblest of the daughters of Cuba as your helpmeet in a great career.”

The marriage was hurried. There was no father to give the girl away, no wedding-gown, no favors; no friends were bidden. The condesa and some old servants were the only witnesses. A priest—a Cuban

who could be trusted—was summoned, and in the same room where Catalina had promised herself to Arriete—in the room where, the day before, she had told Arriete of her love for another, little dreaming that before twenty-four hours she would wed that other—Catalina gave herself to Juan de la Campa. Her aunt kissed her, and Catalina handed the old lady a letter for the conde. The condesa promised to explain all, and then kissed her again.

“Good-bye, darling. These are terrible times, but you are doing right. I hope our country will soon be free from all its troubles; do your part by inspiring men to bravery. Juan, you are doing much for Cuba, but you get your reward before your work is done. You must go now; it is getting late.”

They arrived at the ingenio just before sunset. A volante had brought them from the station, and, when they alighted, Aguero went in first to ascertain the condition of Ramon. Don Jose met him and said the young man had not suffered much, but was evidently failing. He had asked several times if Aguero and the lady had arrived, and seemed anxious. His mind, however, had not wandered, and, after a moment or two of pause, they entered his chamber together, Aguero again preceding.

Carlos sat by the bedside, but the sufferer's eyes were closed, and Aguero stepped lightly up and touched his hand. Ramon unclosed his eyes, and, seeing Aguero alone, exclaimed piteously: “Has she not come? Are you alone?”

Catalina at once came forward. “No, dear Ramon, he is not alone; I am here. You could not think I would fail you now, you who never failed me;” and

as she approached the bedside, Agüero stepped back to allow his wife to speak to her lover.

Catalina's tears fell hot and fast as she knelt by the man who had given his life and his love to her, and both in vain. She leaned over him and kissed him on the lips with the devotion and purity of a sister, and he looked up with intense gratification, and whispered, "I am rewarded."

Carlos and Agüero had both moved away, that there should be no witness to the solemn interview, and, as the dying man began to speak, Agüero beckoned to his friend, and they left the room. Catalina and Ramon were alone.

"Darling, I am not sorry," said the lover, "since I could not win you I did not wish to live, and I am glad to have died in your service. I have given all for you, Catalina, even honor, which is more than life, and almost as much as love."

"Do not say that, Ramon," exclaimed the woman. "You die nobly, doing a noble deed. You die for a friend, Ramon; you die for me. Every act of your life is one of unsullied honor, and this last most of all. How noble in you to send for me and let me know that you do not hate me for all that I have done and been to you. Oh, noblest of gentlemen! most devoted of friends! most unselfish and magnanimous of lovers!"

He listened to the sweetest sounds that can ever fall on human ears—the praises of a man uttered by the woman he loves—and his pallid features became radiant. "I am satisfied," he murmured. "You will be happy. Have no regret for me."

Then he looked faint and exhausted, and a strange

expression passed over his face. "Kiss me once again, darling. 'Tis the last time."

She laid her arms on his pillow, and rested her lips once more close to those that were now almost unconscious, and the pressure seemed to call back the spirit that had started on its flight. He gazed again into her face with a look of unutterable tenderness, as if to assure her that his love went with him into the other world; she caught a faint flutter of his breath, and Ramon de Arriete was beyond all mortal suffering.

